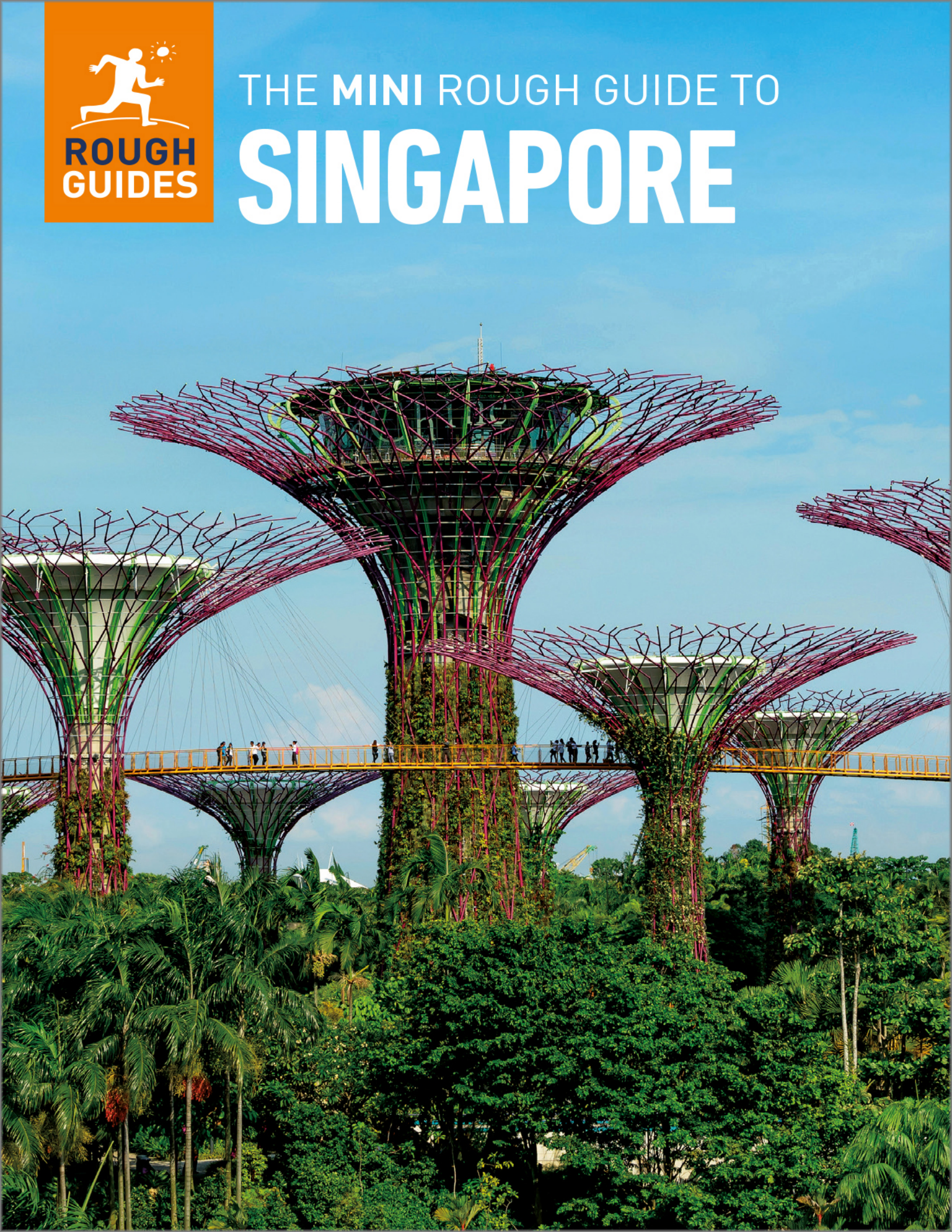
ROUGH GUIDES

THE **MINI** ROUGH GUIDE TO SINGAPORE



THE **MINI** ROUGH GUIDE TO

SINGAPORE

ROUGH GUIDES

HOW TO USE THIS E-BOOK

Getting Around this e-Book

This Rough Guide Mini e-book is designed to inspire you and help you plan for your visit to Singapore, and is also the perfect on-the-ground companion for your trip.

The guide begins with our selection of Highlights, plus a Perfect Itinerary feature to help you plan an unforgettable trip. The Introduction and History and Culture chapters give the lowdown on Singapore, past and present, while the Out and About chapter is a comprehensive guide to all the best sights. You will find ideas for getting active in Things to Do, while the Food and Drink chapter introduces you to the local cuisine and gives listings of our favourite restaurants by area. Travel Essentials offers just that; practical information to help you plan your trip. Finally, Where to Stay provides a special selection of hotels for every budget.

In the Table of Contents and throughout this e-book you will see hyperlinked references. Just tap a hyperlink once to skip to the section you would like to read. Practical information and listings are also hyperlinked, so as long as you have an external connection to the internet, you can tap a link to go directly to the website for more information.

Maps

All key attractions and sights in Singapore are numbered and cross-referenced to high-quality maps. Wherever you see the reference [map], tap once to go straight to the related map. You can also double-tap any map for a zoom view.

Images

You'll find lots of beautiful high-resolution images that capture the essence of Singapore. Simply double-tap an image to see it in full-screen.

About Rough Guides:

Published in 1982, the first Rough Guide – to Greece – was created by Mark Ellingham and a small group of friends who couldn't find a guidebook to meet their needs. Combining a contemporary, journalistic style with a thoroughly practical approach to travellers' needs, the immediate success of the book

spawned a series that rapidly covered dozens of destinations. These days, Rough Guides include recommendations from budget to luxury and cover more than 120 destinations worldwide, all regularly updated by our team of ever curious, roaming writers. These Rough Guide Minis may be small, but they are packed with information and inspiration and offer amazing value for money.

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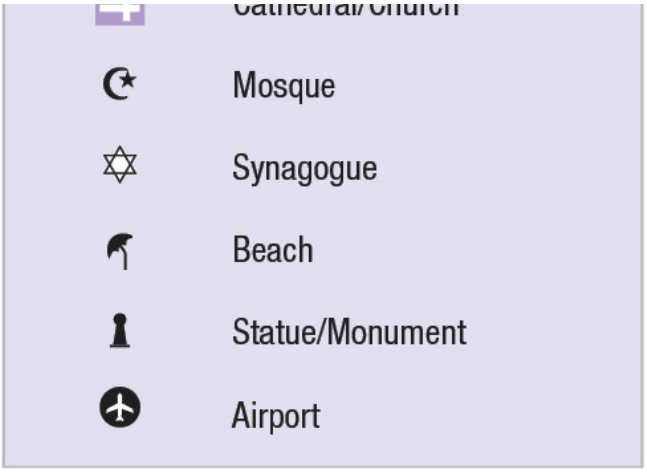
Map Legend

City

- Freeway/Highway/Motorway
- Divided Highway
- Main Roads
- Minor Roads
- Pedestrian Roads
- Pedestrian Area
- Steps
- Footpath
- Railway
- Funicular Railway
- Tunnel
- Important Building
- Transport Hub
- Park
- Bus Station
- Tourist Information
- Main Post Office
- Cathedral/Church

Regional

- Freeway/Highway/Motorway (with junction)
- Freeway (under construction)
- Divided Highway
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Minor Road
- Track
- Footpath
- International Boundary
- State/Province Boundary
- National Park/Reserve
- Ferry Route
- Marshland/Swamp
- Glacier
- Salt Lake
- Airport/Airfield
- Church (ruins)
- Monastery
- Castle/Castle Ruins
- Chateau/Stately Home
- Cave
- Place of Interest



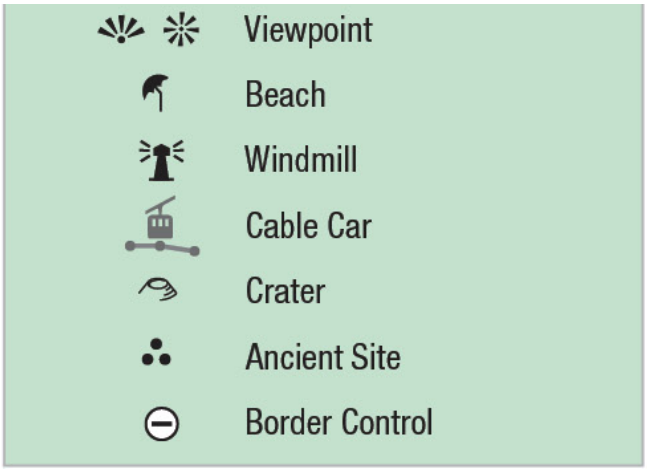


TABLE OF CONTENTS

10 Things Not To Miss
A Perfect Day In Singapore
Overview
- Green Spaces
- Wired For Success

History and Culture
- Raffles Rules
- Rubber and Tin
- The Fall of Singapore
- Lee Kuan Yew in Charge
- The New Singapore

Out and About
- Singapore River
  - North Bank
  - South Bank
  - Marina Bay
  - Boat Quay and upriver
- Civic District
  - St Andrew's Cathedral
  - National Gallery Singapore
  - Armenian Street

- Fort Canning Park
- National Museum
- Singapore Art Museum (SAM)
- Chijmes
- The Raffles

Chinatown

- Chinatown Heritage Centre
- Chinatown streets
- Tanjong Pagar District
- Singapore City Gallery
- Club Street
- Telok Ayer Street
- Thian Hock Keng Temple
- Art and design

Little India

- Serangoon Road
- Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple
- Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple
- Buddhist temples

Kampong Glam

- Arab Street
- Sultan Mosque
- Malay Heritage Centre
- Kampong Glam shopping
- More historic mosques
- Bugis
- Waterloo Street

Orchard Road

Geylang Serai and Katong

- Katong
- East Coast

Zoos, parks and gardens

- Singapore Botanic Gardens
- Jurong Lake Gardens
- Haw Par Villa
- Bird Paradise

- Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
- Dairy Farm Nature Park
- MacRitchie Reservoir Park
- Singapore Zoo
- River Wonders
- Night Safari

Island excursions

- Sentosa
- Southern Islands
- Pulau Ubin

Things To Do

Shopping

- Tax-Free Shopping
- Where To Shop
  - Civic District
  - Orchard Road
  - Chinatown
  - Little India
  - Suburbs
- Specialist Shops
  - Antiques and handicrafts
  - Bookstores
- Tailors

Entertainment

- Performing Arts

Nightlife

- Singapore River
- Civic District
- Orchard Road
- Sentosa

Sports

Singapore for Children

Food and Drink

Hawker Centres and Food Courts

Chinese Cuisine

Malay Cuisine

Peranakan (Nyonya) Cuisine

- Indian Cuisine
- Seafood
- Eurasian Food
- European Cuisines
- Vegan & Vegetarian Cuisines
- Exotic Fruits
- Drinks

Where To Eat

- Singapore River
- Civic District
- Chinatown and CBD
- Little India and Kamping Glam
- Orchard Road
- South Singapore
- Holland Village and around
- East Coast

A–Z Travel Tips

- A
  - Accessible travel
  - Accommodation
  - Airport
- B
  - Budgeting for your trip
- C
  - Car hire
  - Climate
  - Clothing
  - Crime and safety
- D
  - Driving
- E
  - Electricity
  - Embassies and High Commissions
  - Emergencies

G
Getting there
Guides and tours
H
Health and medical care
Holidays
L
Language
LGBTQ+ travellers
M
Maps
Media
Money
O
Opening times
P
Post offices
Public transport
T
Telephone
Time zones
Tipping
Toilets
Tourist information
V
Visas and entry requirements
W
Websites and internet access
Y
Youth hostels
Where To Stay
Singapore River
Civic District
Chinatown
Little India

Orchard Road
Sentosa

10 THINGS NOT TO MISS

Singapore Tourist Board

1 CHINATOWN

From noodles to jade, this is the place for all things Chinese; don’t miss its night market. For more information, click here.

iStock

2 ESPLANADE – THEATRES ON THE BAY

One of the city's most iconic buildings. For more information, click here.

Singapore Sling
RAFFLES
HOTEL

Raffles Hotel

3 RAFFLES HOTEL

Visit Asia's most famous hotel and have a Singapore Sling at the Long Bar. For more information, click here.

iStock

4 ORCHARD ROAD

With more malls than you can shake a stick at, this is the ultimate shopping paradise. For more information, click here.

Singapore Tourism Board

5 CLARKE QUAY AND BOAT QUAY

Here you'll find some of the hottest restaurants and clubs in town. For more information, click here.

Gardens by the Bay

6 GARDENS BY THE BAY

This spectacular green space just minutes from the city is home to thousands of rare plants. For more information, click here.

Singapore Tourism Board

7 NIGHT SAFARI

The best after-dark activity. For more information, click here.

Shutterstock

8 SENTOSA ISLAND

Touristy it may be, but Sentosa has some of Singapore's best beaches, attractions and historical sights. For more information, click here.

Shutterstock

9 THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

There’s more than just history on offer here – check out its handsome interiors too. For more information, click here.

Shutterstock

10 LITTLE INDIA

Get pleasantly lost in its colourful backstreets. For more information, click here.

A PERFECT DAY IN SINGAPORE

9.00am

Breakfast. Kick off the day with a typical Singaporean breakfast of freshly brewed coffee with kaya toast and soft-boiled eggs at Killiney Kopitiam, an old-world coffee shop established in 1919.

10.00am

Cultural lesson. Visit the stunning old school-turned-Peranakan Museum on Armenian Street and learn about the Straits Chinese culture and heritage unique to this part of the world.

12 noon

Lunch. Try Peranakan fare next door at True Blue (47/49 Armenian Street), or Cantonese dim sum at Lei Garden at Chijmes in the City Hall district.

2.00pm

Retail therapy. Across the road from Chijmes is Raffles City Shopping Centre where you can enjoy a shopping spree. Or go underground to the CityLink Mall which will lead you to Suntec City's Fountain of Wealth, the world's biggest fountain. The massive shopping mall here has excellent retail outlets.

3.30pm

Sky high. Take a 30-minute observation ride on the Singapore Flyer, the world's third-largest observation wheel, which affords a bird's-eye view of the city. After the ride, take a breather at the street-food stalls below and munch on some local snacks and desserts.

4.30pm

Museum time. Meander across the double-helix bridge to the lotus-shaped building next to Marina Bay Sands. This is the iconic ArtScience Museum, which houses some fascinating media, technology, design and architecture exhibits.

6.00pm

River views. For a different view of Singapore, take a leisurely bumboat ride along the Singapore River, starting from the Merlion Park, across the waters from Marina Bay Sands. The pleasant 30-minute cruise on an environmentally friendly electric bumboat brings you to Boat Quay and Clarke Quay.

7.00pm

Sunset drinks. Back at Clarke's Bay, grab a sunset cocktail at The Riverhouse, a bar, restaurant and nightclub housed inside a gorgeous, 150-year-old Chinese waterfront property.

8.00pm

Dinner. Walk over to Monti at the Fullerton Pavilion, Collyer Quay, for some fine Italian fare. The Spectra Light and Water show starts opposite at 8pm just in front the Marina Bay Sands, a city landmark, topped by the world's largest cantilevered platform.

OVERVIEW

Singapore is a small island nation that boasts big attractions and achievements. Strategically situated on the tip of the Malaysian peninsula between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, little Singapore transformed itself in a matter of decades from a tropical outpost of British Empire into a modern metropolis, home to one of the busiest ports in the world, the second-largest oil refiner on the planet and a major international financial centre. While Singapore's astonishing wealth sets it apart from most tiny islands, it is its population that makes it unique. A melding of Chinese, Malay and Indian peoples, this Southeast Asian crossroads has emerged as a model of ethnic and religious tolerance. While the different ethnic groups continue to celebrate their own cultural heritage, Singapore offers an inclusive and diverse community. A Malay wedding, for instance, can take place right next to a Chinese funeral at a void deck, which is the ground floor of a public housing apartment block. Take a walk around the city, and it's not unusual to see a Buddhist temple, a Hindu shrine and a mosque within two blocks of one another. With policies, laws and practices in place, as well as an innate tolerance and respect among the people of one another's faith and culture, Singapore is sometimes touted as one of the most racially harmonious countries in the world, and for good reason. It also stands out as the cleanest, most efficient and highly organised society in Asia.

Free Wi-Fi

Free wireless internet access is available at many public places in Singapore under the Wireless@SGx scheme. Simply download the app and register. Alternatively, prepaid 5G sim cards like hi!Tourist are available at the airport. For more information, click here.

Singapore Tourism Board
Clarke Quay is a fantastic place to eat and drink

Yet what attracts travellers is not Singapore's wealth nor its social wisdom; it is the contrast of Asia's best resorts and malls with the well-preserved, traditional neighbourhoods. Shopping and eating are Singaporeans' unofficial religions, and it isn't long before visitors are swept up in a tidal wave of unapologetic consumerism. Because of its strategic location and status as a free-trade zone, Singapore boasts everything from markets to malls, where you'll find international brands alongside goods manufactured in nearby Malaysia, Thailand and other handicraft centres of Southeast Asia. Again, because of its location, Singapore offers the most diverse culinary experience of any Asian nation. Here, the very best Chinese, Indian, Malay and an array of other international dishes are available, at prices that range from cheap street eats to Michelin Star restaurants.

Finally, for the sightseers and cultural explorers, Singapore's historic districts, from Arab Street and Little India to the Civic District and Chinatown, are great to experience on foot. There are world-class modern attractions as well, from gardens with conservatories to the world's finest zoos. These treasures are tiny but brilliant isles in an urban sea of modern shopping centres (including one

with the world's largest fountain), government housing apartment blocks (home to millions of residents) and skyscrapers (where the money is counted).

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
MacRitchie Treetop Walk

It is curious how so much (culturally, ethnically and economically) is contained in so small a space. The main island of Singapore, together with over 64 surrounding islands, covers about 699 sq km (270 sq miles) – four times smaller than Luxembourg or Rhode Island, the smallest state in the United States. Yet about half of this land consists of forest reserves, marshes and other green areas.

GREEN SPACES

Singapore's green zones surprise many first-time visitors, at least those expecting to find a colossal air-conditioned city-state of glass and steel housed under a plastic bubble. While crowded and expanding, with a population of 5.9 million (2023), Singapore is not a sprawling patchwork; instead about 85 percent of its residents live in housing estates that consist of neatly kept

apartment towers stretching to the sky. These residential towers are distributed across the main island in suburban towns, many of which have their own urban services. Within the tower clusters and between the towns, there are extensive green zones and areas of parkland.

Although linked to Malaysia by geography and by history, Singapore is an independent country, with a population dominated by people of Chinese descent (74.3 percent). Malays make up 13.5 percent of Singapore's citizens, Indians 9.0 percent, with the remaining less than four percent comprising Eurasians, Indonesians, Filipinos and other minority groups. There are four official languages (English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil), with English designated as the language of administration and Malay as the national language. On the ground, many Singaporeans also speak Singlish, a colloquial language that involves a mix of English, Chinese dialects and Malay. Most Chinese Singaporeans speak a variety of languages, such as Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese, reflecting the various origins of the community.

One ethnic group that has played a large part in shaping the customs, architecture and cuisine of Singapore are the Straits Chinese or Peranakan, a hybrid race that evolved from intermarriage between migrants from mainland China and the native Malay population. The men are known as *baba* and the women *nyonya*, and they have a culture that is a charming blend of Malay, Chinese and some British elements. The British themselves also exerted a lasting influence on the language, customs and administration, since they literally created modern Singapore in 1819 and guided its destiny until a new self-governing constitution was approved in 1959.

Respecting elders

In Singapore respect is shown to one's elders; children are obliged to support their parents during retirement years. Under the Maintenance of Parents Act, any parent over the age of 60 who is unable to maintain himself can apply for an order that ensures one or more of his children pay him an allowance.

WIRED FOR SUCCESS

Singapore is a well-wired nation, with many homes linked to a countrywide network of fibre-optic cables supplying a range of services, from cable TV to broadband internet. It became one of the first countries in the world to be

covered by standalone 5G network infrastructure, with over 95 percent coverage.

Singapore's transportation system is a showcase of national industry. The subway (MRT) serves more than 2.7 million people daily and continues to expand to all corners of the main island. Over 13,861 taxis serve the city in addition to 73,000 private hire cars. Cabs are inexpensive, clean and accept credit cards. Only about a third of Singapore's residents (who enjoy the second-highest per capita income in Asia) can afford a personal car due to the deliberate imposition of high taxes, restrictions on car use and tariffs levied on automobile ownership. This has kept the downtown area from experiencing the gridlock and road rage common to metropolitan areas in the region. Singapore's airport, often hailed as the best in the world, enjoys the same unrestricted flow; clearing customs and immigration is often a matter of how fast you can walk.

Of course, Singapore's efficiency, orderliness, cleanliness and general good behaviour has come at what some critics consider a steep price. Even locals joke that Singapore is a 'fine' country, seeing as how the government has imposed a fine on nearly every objectionable behaviour, from not flushing public toilets to selling chewing gum. Singapore is also known as a country with severe penalties for more serious offences. Caning is prescribed for some crimes; the death penalty is always enforced for drug smuggling. But what some Westerners perceive as an authoritarian city-state, with draconian laws and little personal freedom, is regarded by many Singaporeans as merely the common-sense way to run society. Singapore's economic success and its ability to combat such social ills as drug use, corruption and pollution have made it the envy of many emerging nations and a model for Asia in general.

Singapore Tourism Board
Chingay Parade entertainers

For sceptical Westerners, seeing Singapore for themselves can be an eye-opener. This is certainly not an overly oppressed population. On the contrary, Singaporeans tend to be outgoing and cheerful, warm and hospitable. Some say that social engineering in Singapore has proved a success because it is built on the traditional Confucian and Asian values of the region. While Singapore is cosmopolitan and Western in outlook, it is at the core a society of people who place a high value on family and nation, racial tolerance and consensus.

While a few visitors might judge the politics of Singapore as oppressive, everyone could be forgiven for finding the weather so. Just 136km (85 miles) north of the equator, Singapore is hot and humid all year round. It hardly cools off at night by more than a few degrees. The lowest temperature ever recorded in Singapore was a ‘chilly’ 19.4°C (66.9°F) and the highest was 37°C (98.6°F) in 2023. The high humidity leaves most visitors drenched in sweat shortly after hitting the streets. Fortunately, ever ingenious Singapore has taken on the forces of the climate, too. In public areas, everything that can be air-conditioned usually is, from buses and shopping malls to private homes. Due to

manmade climate change, the mean temperature has been steadily rising since 1980, as has the mean sea level in the Strait of Singapore, at a rate of 1.2mm to 1.7mm per year.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

With its location at the crossroads of Southeast Asia's sea lanes, it's no surprise that Singapore has long functioned as a major trading post. Malay, Indian and Chinese merchants plied the Straits of Malacca for centuries; Chinese sailors apparently named the island Pu-luo-chung (Island at Land's End) as early as the 3rd century AD. Malays settled on the island by the 7th century, naming it Temasek (Sea Town). Around the 14th century, the Sumatran prince Sang Nila Utama, seeking shelter on the island from a storm, gave it its modern name after sighting what he thought was a lion. More likely he saw a tiger, native to Singapore and Malaysia. The name 'Singapura' is Sanskrit for 'Lion City', and Singapore has been the Lion City ever since, regardless of the fact that no wild lions ever roamed here, and no wild tigers remain.

Shutterstock
Sir Stamford Raffles statue

Pirates used the island as a base for centuries, and control of Singapore, the Malay peninsula and the Straits of Malacca wavered between Siamese and East Javan conquerors until the arrival of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore.

RAFFLES RULES

Raffles (1781–1826) only visited Singapore briefly over a four-year period, but he left a giant's imprint on the island. An officer of the British East India Company and a colonial entrepreneur of extraordinary vision, Raffles spoke the Malay language and knew its customs. He governed Java and wrote a history of the region, but his goal was to establish a trading post in the strategic waters between Indonesia and Malaysia, where the Dutch, as well as the British, had considerable colonial holdings. Raffles succeeded in this aim when he landed on the banks of the Singapore River on 29 January 1819 and signed treaties with contending Malay sultans, thus establishing Singapore as a British trading post. The Dutch recognised the claim in 1824. In 1826, Malacca, Penang and Singapore effectively became British trading colonies under the British Straits Settlements.

Upon his arrival in 1819, Raffles found an island shrouded in dense jungle and swamp, occupied by a few Malay families and some Chinese traders. Free-trade policies and firm but liberal colonial rule under Raffles' direction soon created a boomtown of 10,000 residents, where 2,000 ships called annually. The sultans sold Singapore's rights to the British in 1824 and Raffles continued his social reforms (abolishing slavery), cleared the land and oversaw an ambitious construction campaign. He opened Singapore to immigration, bringing in labourers, merchants and businessmen from all over Southeast Asia and, most notably, from China. Raffles, in short, laid the groundwork for the vibrant free port of Singapore that remains in place today.

Public domain
Harbour and town of Singapore, 1846

RUBBER AND TIN

The British success in Singapore depended on many elements, including cooperation with the Chinese clan organisations (the *kongsi*) and complicity in the opium trade, which was a major source of revenue from the 1830s onwards. Singapore became a British colony officially in 1867, just before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which further spurred trade in the Straits of Malacca. In the first 50 years after Raffles' appearance, the island's population mushroomed from a few hundred to over 100,000, as Qing China teetered on the edge of collapse. As the 20th century loomed, the export of rubber and tin became Singapore's major industry, erasing the pirate coves and tiger dens of earlier times.

Generations of Chinese migrants from southern China, many of whom married locals, came to be ardent supporters of British ways. This community dominated local politics and formed the wealthier ranks of the mercantile class under colonial rule, but they kept close connections with their Motherland as well. Political agitator turned First President of the Republic of China, Dr. Sun Yat-sen arrived in Singapore to set up a branch of his revolutionary party in 1906. A Memorial Hall commemorates his time in the Lion City today.

The Great Depression in the West swept through Singapore in 1929, hurling many miners and rubber tappers into extreme poverty, but the 1920s also saw the ascent of Singapore millionaires, including Aw Boon Haw, the purveyor of the Tiger Balm ointment. Discontent with colonial rule increased in the 1930s, alongside the rise of India's independence movement and China's Communist Party. The revolution was, however, put on hold by World War II.

THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

Winston Churchill would call the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942 'the worst disaster and the largest capitulation' in English history. The British, confident of an attack from the sea, had built a strong naval defence in Singapore and armed Sentosa Island to the south with large guns, but the Japanese came overland, sweeping down the Malay peninsula on foot and by bicycle, eventually seizing nearby Johor Bahru. Outnumbered three to one, the Japanese nevertheless struck quickly after landing in Singapore, occupying Bukit Timah, which held the British food and fuel depots, and bluffed the British into surrender in seven days. Nearly 30,000 prisoners of war were incarcerated in Changi Prison, near the present airport. They were later led on a forced march through Malaysia all the way to Thailand, where many died building the railway and bridge over the River Kwai.

Public domain
Collyer Quay,1890

Residents of Singapore, especially those of Chinese ancestry, were punished more severely than the Australian, Indian and British soldiers, since they had opposed Japan's earlier occupation of China. By the time of Japan's surrender in 1945, about 100,000 Singapore residents had died by execution or of starvation.

The British resumed control after World War II, but their authority was now much diminished and Singapore's desire for political autonomy was strong. The British slowly relaxed their control in the region, creating a Federation of Malaya and also making Singapore – which was predominately Chinese – a separate Crown Colony in 1955. The colony's first chief minister, David Marshall, demanded independence, but Britain would not agree. In the meantime, a new party was rising in Singapore, headed by a new leader who would shape a modern Singapore as profoundly as Raffles had shaped the colonial city-state.

Public domain
Japanese air raid, 1942

Singapore story

For an insight into Singapore's meteoric rise, read *The Singapore Story*, the vivid and fascinating memoirs of Singapore's first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who has deservedly been credited with bringing the country to where it is today.

LEE KUAN YEW IN CHARGE

Singapore's modern-day Raffles was Lee Kuan Yew. Lee, born in 1923 to Straits Chinese parents, graduated from the University of Cambridge with honours. Returning to Singapore in 1950, he cast his lot with those advocating the overthrow of the British, helping to form the People's Action Party (PAP) in 1955.

Supporting labour unions, working with local communists and calling for a merger with the rest of Malaya, the PAP won the first internal self-government elections of 1959 and Lee became Singapore's prime minister. Then, quickly cutting his links with the communist and leftist elements, Lee concentrated on severing ties with Britain by uniting with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak to create the Federation of Malaysia in 1963.

It was not long, however, before Singapore was being viewed as a threat to the new Malaysian republic. Muslim forces hastened the expulsion of Singapore, which came in 1965, dashing Lee's dream of Malaysian unity after just 23 months, but leading directly to Singapore's full independence.

Shutterstock
Tribute to the late Lee Kuan Yew

Many doubted whether Singapore had the resources, the will and the genius to survive as a tiny independent nation, but Lee seemed to supply all three elements. As prime minister from 1959 to 1990, Lee has been hailed, especially in Singapore itself, as the singular architect of his nation. He harmonised the contending ethnic forces, brought strict order to society, emphasised efficiency, embraced Western ideas, dealt harshly with his political

opponents, ruled the nation like a father and focused unrelentingly on economic progress. So far, his People's Action Party has not spent a single day out of office since independence, and most Singaporeans venerate Lee Kuan Yew as the country's founding father.

THE NEW SINGAPORE

Under Lee Kuan Yew and his successors, Goh Chok Tong and Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore has continued to be one of Southeast Asia's brightest stars over the last three decades. The government's paternal approach has defused racial and labour disputes, public housing schemes have provided most citizens with their own homes and trade and business policies have attracted plenty of foreign trade and investment. While Singapore's massive modernisation has its critics and much of old Singapore has been razed, the standard of living has risen to the highest international benchmarks. Social engineering projects – which include banning smoking in public places, outlawing the sale of chewing gum, monitoring public toilets for flushing, imposing huge taxes on car ownership and running state-sponsored matchmaking services – have drawn sneers from overseas, but Singapore is the most mannerly and cleanest of all Asian cities.

From the perspective of Western democracies, Singapore's great achievements have come at the expense of personal and political freedom. Dissidents have been jailed or exiled, and critical publications have been banned (*Asian Wall Street Journal*, 1985) or sued (*International Herald Tribune*, 1994) for unflattering coverage. The local media, from TV to newspapers, have often censored themselves into blandness. The case of David Marshall (1908–1995), one of Singapore's founding fathers, is illustrative. A Singapore-born Jew whose parents were from Iraq, Marshall was educated in Britain, became a prisoner of war when the Japanese invaded Singapore, and later established himself as Singapore's best criminal defence attorney. He was elected as Singapore's first chief minister in 1955 but, with the rise of Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP, soon found himself cast in the role of dissenter. In 1969, Lee and his government banned all trials by jury, putting a severe dent in Marshall's high-profile career. Marshall was among the very few in Singapore to openly oppose caning as a punishment for minor criminal offences. The year before his death he branded Lee a fascist.

IT PAYS TO BE A POLITICIAN

Singapore's politicians are among the highest paid in the world. The president draws a high annual pay (also known as the Privy Purse) of more than S$3 million (US$2.2 million). Almost as attractive is the prime minister's annual salary of S$2.1 million (US$1.54 million), while a cabinet minister gets a pay of S$1.5 million (US$1.1 million) a year. Comparatively, the President of the United States pulls in only US$400,000 annually.

The government believes that high salaries are necessary to attract the best talents and to prevent corruption. And because political leaders are expected to perform like CEOs, they should be paid like corporate honchos. The salaries of Singapore's ministers are determined by benchmarking to those of top earners in six professions.

iStock
Most Singaporeans live in public housing

Such a view in Singapore today is perhaps that of the minority. Full employment, bureaucratic efficiency, social stability and a continued high standard of living have pleased most residents, who are free to vote out the ruling party under Singapore's parliamentary system. The ruling party has promised to open the political process to the people and, by making Singapore a more cultured society, stem the brain drain of some of its most highly educated citizens to the West. How Singapore will shape itself to meet raised expectations in the 21st century remains an open question.

HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

14th century Singapura (Sanskrit for ‘Lion City’) is named by Sang Nila Utama, a Sumatran prince.

15th century Singapore is made part of the Malay kingdom of Malacca.

1819 Sir Stamford Raffles makes Singapore a British trading post.

1824 Singapore is purchased by the British East India Company. It forms part of the Straits Settlements together with Malacca and Penang.

1867 The Straits Settlements become a British Crown Colony.

1869 Suez Canal opens and Singapore becomes an important stop along the main shipping route for rubber.

1942–5 Singapore is occupied by the Japanese army.

1946 The British make Singapore a Crown Colony.

1955 David Marshall heads the first elected government.

1959 Singapore achieves self-government; Lee Kuan Yew and the People’s Action Party (PAP) control the new parliament.

1963 Singapore joins the Federation of Malaysia.

1965 Singapore separates from Malaysia and becomes an independent state. Lee Kuan Yew heads the new Republic of Singapore.

1990 Goh Chok Tong takes over from Lee Kuan Yew.

1998 The economy is affected by the Asian financial crisis, but recovers a year later.

2004 Lee Hsien Loong takes over as prime minister.

2005 SR Nathan returns for his second term as president.

2010 Singapore hosts the first Youth Olympic Games.

2011 SR Nathan steps down as president and Tony Tan is elected.

2015 The PAP wins 83 of 89 seats in the general election. Singapore hosts the 28th Southeast Asian Games.

2019 The first stations on the Thomson-East Metro Coast Line were opened. The whole line is expected to be completed in 2025.

2020 The first case of COVID-19 was detected on January 23 and the first lockdown was implemented on April 7.

2023 Singapore executes drug trafficker Saridewi Djamani.

2024 Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announces resignation.

OUT AND ABOUT

Singapore can take days to explore. In addition to excellent eating and shopping, there are plenty of attractions well worth taking in. The leading sights are grouped here by district, with most located near the heart of the city and the Singapore River, which flows through it. Many of the older neighbourhoods and attractions have been modernised, but there are still some areas that have escaped renewal and offer a window into old Singapore.

iStock
The Supertrees found in the Gardens by the Bay

Singapore City
0 500 m
0 500 yds
N
Serangoon
Geylang Serai, Katong
Singapore Changi
see Orchard Road map
Newton
Newton Circus
Dunearn Road
Bukit Timah Rd
Bukit Timah Road
Evelyn Rd
Newton Road
Surrey Rd
Khiang Guan Ave
Lincoln Road
Keng Lee Road
Kampong Java Road
Scotts Road
Clemenceau Avenue
Monk's Hill Terr.
Hooper Rd
Central Expressway
Cavenagh Road
Kg. Java Road
Java Road
KAMPONG JAVA PARK
FARRER PARK FIELDS
Norfolk
Carlisle
Cambridge Road
Truro Road
Hertford Rd
Bristol Rd
Dorset Rd
Hampshire Rd
Northumberland Road
Race Course Road
Owen Road
Kent Road
Oxford Rd
Dorset Rd
Mergui Rd
Rangoon Road
Sing Avenue
Joo Ave
Tessensohn
Balestier Road
Serangoon Rd
Serangoon Road
Leong San Buddhist Temple
Sri Vadapathira Kaliamman Temple
Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple
24
Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple
23
Farrer Park
Sturdee Road
Petain Road
Jalan Besar
Foch Road
Bendemeer Road
Boon Keng Road
Jalan Lembah Kallang
Bendemeer
Lavender Street
Cavan Rd
Horne Road
Avenue
Penhas Rd
Jellicoe Road
French Road
King George's
Tyrwhitt
Kitchener
Syed Alwi Road
Desker Road
Rowell Road
Kampong Kapor Road
Maude Rd
Townshend Rd
Syed Alwi Road
Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple
Norris Rd
Veerasamy
Cuff Rd
Buffalo Road
LITTLE INDIA
22
Little India
Tekka Centre
Little India Arcade
Campbell La
Dunlop St
Dickson Rd
Upp. Weld Rd
Jalan Besar
Pitt St Rd
Abdul Gaffoor Mosque
Sungei Rd
Sungei
Rochor Canal Rd
Rochor Canal Road
Malabar Jamaath Mosque
Victoria Street
Lavender
KAMPONG GLAM
North Bridge Road
Istana Kampung Gelam
Jalan Sultan
Aliwal St
Hajjah Fatimah Mosque
Beach Road
Arab St
25
26
Sultan Mosque
Kandahar St
Sultan Gate
Pahang Street
Bussorah Mall
Haji Lane
Nicoll Highway
Nicholl Highway
Avenue
Republic
MARINA PROMANADE PARK
Marina
Promenade
F1 Pit Lane
Anthony Road
Peck Hay Road
Winstedt Road
Cairnhill Road
Cairnhill Rise
Cairnhill Circle
Cavenagh Road
Istana
Restricted Area
MOUNT EMILY PARK
MacKenzie Road
Mount Emily Rd
Wilkie Road
Sophia Road
Bideford Rd
Emerald Hill Rd
Saunders
Hullet
Cairnhill Rd
Central Expressway (CTE)
Orchard Road
Peranakan Place
Cuppage Rd
Koek Rd
Plaza Singapora
Mount Sophia
313@Somerset
Somerset Rd
Somerset
Penang Road
Exeter Rd
Eber Road
ISTANA PARK
Dhoby Ghaut
Oldham L.
Penang Lane
MacDonald House
Kilinev Rd
Oxley Rd
Penang Rd
Orchard Rd
Prinsep St
Selegie Road
Niven Road
Short St
Albert Street
Rochor
Rochor Road
Ophir Road
Middle Street
Bencoolen Street
Waterloo Street
Queen St
Bugis Street Market
28
27
Victoria Street
Bugis
Bugis Junction
Beach Rd
Bencoolen
Singapore Art Museum
Bras Basah
16
National Library
Mint Museum of Toys
Fort Canning Road
15
National Museum
Battle Box
Hotel Fort Canning
River Valley Road
Oxley Walk
Chettiar's Temple (Sri Thandayuthapani)
Tank Road
FORT CANNING PARK
14
Fort Canning Reservoir
Substation
Peranakan Museum
13
Armenian St
Armenian Church
12
National Archives
Cathedral of the Good Shepherd
CHIJMES
Bras Basah Road
Bridge Road
Seah St
17 Raffles Hotel
North Bridge Road
Raffles City
Stamford Rd
Beach Road
St Andrew's Cathedral
City Hall
10
Esplanade
WAR MEMORIAL PARK
Nicoll Highway
Fountain of Wealth
Suntec City
Temasek Blvd
Raffles Blvd
Marina Square
Boulevard
Temasek Avenue
Promenade
Benjamin Sheares Bridge
7
Singapore Flyer
River Valley Close
Martin Road
Kim Yam Rd
Sultan Road
Singapore Repertory Theatre
Fort Canning
Clemenceau Ave
Central Expressway
River Valley Road
Old Hill Street Police Station
Hill Street
High St
Clarke Quay
9
Robertson Quay
Rodyk St
Saiboo St
Mohamed
Singapore Tyler Print Institute
Riverside Point
North Boat Quay
Singapore
National Gallery Singapore
11
St Andrew's Rd
PADANG
Connaught Drive
Cenotaph
3
Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay
Raffles Avenue
Raffles
Marina Promenade
Supreme Courts
Parliament House
The Arts House
Esplanade Bridge
Esplanade Drive
The Float @ Marina Bay
Helix Bridge
Omar Kampung Melaka Mosque
Clarke Quay
Eu Tong Sen Street
New Bridge Road
North Bridge Rd
Boat Quay
Raffles's Landing Site
1
Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall
Jalan Minyak
Upper Cross St
Havelock Rd
North Canal Rd
HONG LIM PARK
Circular Rd
8
Asian Civilisations Museum
Cavenagh Bridge
2
Fullerton
One Fullerton
MERLION PARK
Marina Bay
Art Science Museum
5
Chin Swee Road
Central Expressway
PEARL'S HILL CITY PARK
Pearl's Hill Terr.
People's Park Complex
Chinatown
Chinatown Heritage Centre
Chinatown Point
Upp. Pickering St
Upp. Hokkien St
George St
S Canal Rd
OUB Plaza
RAFFLES PLACE
OUB Centre
CHINATOWN
18
Mosque St
Pagoda St
19
Temple St
Smith St
Jamae Mosque
20
Upp. Cross St
China St
Far East Square
Church St
Market Street
Raffles Place
Collyer Quay
Fullerton Pavilion
Clifford Pier
Fullerton Bay Hotel
Customs House
4
Marina Bay Sands Promenade
Bayfront Ave
Marina Bay Sands Hotel and SkyPark
Sands Casino
Bayfront
Sheares Avenue
GARDENS BY THE BAY
6
Outram Park
Outram Road
Chinatown Complex
Sago St
South Bridge Rd
Sri Mariamman Temple
Telok Ayer
Telok Ayer St
21
Thian Hock Keng Temple
Boon Tat St
Stanley St
Cecil St
Robinsons St
Raffles Quay
Marina Boulevard
Downtown
Central Boulevard
MARINA LINK
THE PROMONTORY @MARINA BAY
Sands Expo and Convention Centre
DUXTON PLAIN PARK
Keong Saik Rd
Neil Rd
Maxwell

SINGAPORE RIVER

A good place to begin exploration is the **Singapore River**. This was where Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, Singapore's founder, and other early traders and immigrants first landed. The mangrove swamps, sultans' palaces and floating skulls deposited by pirates are long gone, as are the junks and coolies. The river, far cleaner than it was pre-1977, is lined by conservation shophouses painted in colourful hues and surrounded by colonial architectural gems, many housing bars and restaurants.

NORTH BANK

Raffles' Landing Site on the north bank of the river is where Sir Stamford Raffles first landed in 1819. The spot is marked by a white marble statue cast in 1972 from a bronze one that is a stone's throw away in front of the Victoria Theatre. Flanking the white statue is the not-to-be-missed **Asian Civilisations Museum** ❶ [map] (1 Empress Place; www.acm.org.sg; charge, concession available). Built as government offices in 1865, the stately Neoclassical building now showcases an excellent collection of artefacts documenting the civilisations of East, Southeast, South and West Asia. You can easily spend a few hours viewing the well-curated displays here. Take a break from sightseeing and have a drink or bite at Empress Place, located at the river-facing side of the building.

iStock
The Singapore River runs past the Central Business District

Next to the museum is another ensemble of magnificent colonial architecture. The **Victoria Theatre & Concert Hall** (9 Empress Place; www.vtvch.com; charge) were Singapore's old Town Hall and Queen Victoria Memorial Hall; in 2014, they were beautifully restored to their 1905 appearance. The original bronze statue of Sir Stamford Raffles, which dates back to 1887, stands in front of the two buildings. Just behind is **The Arts House** (1 Old Parliament Lane; www.theartshouse.sg; free), built in 1827 as Singapore's courthouse and serving as the Parliament House from 1965 to 1999. It now has a 200-seat chamber staging arts performances, a visual arts gallery, an art-house cinema and several additional arts venues. It is possibly the oldest surviving building in Singapore.

SOUTH BANK

From Empress Place Waterfront extends **Cavenagh Bridge**, built of iron rails from Scotland in 1869 to connect the financial and administrative districts that Raffles had envisioned. This pedestrian bridge leads to the skyscrapers of

Raffles Place, the heart of Avi, which dictate the most propitious locations of the city's Western-style high-rises.

Next to Raffles Place is the lavish **Fullerton Hotel** ❷ [map] (1 Fullerton Square; www.fullertonhotel.com), built as the General Post Office in 1928. The Neoclassical hotel, with grand columns outside and a contemporary interior, stands on the site of Fort Fullerton, which guarded the entrance to Singapore from 1829 to 1873. The hotel's Post Bar is a firm favourite with workers from the CBD area.

River sculpture

A number of public sculptures dot the Singapore River area. Of note are Fernando Botero's *Bird* and Salvador Dali's *Homage to Newton* outside and at the foyer of UOB Plaza respectively. There are also bronze sculptures depicting life along the river in days long past, notably *First Generation* by Chong Fah Cheong as well as contemporary works like the reflective sphere's on the lawn outside the Asian Civilizations Museum by Baet Yeok Kuan called *24 Hours in Singapore*.

MARINA BAY

An underpass below the Fullerton emerges at **One Fullerton** (www.thefullertonheritage.com/), a waterfront dining and nightlife hub. At the north end of One Fullerton is the **Merlion Park**, which contains the Merlion statue – the city's iconic mascot with the head of a lion and the body of a fish. This 8m (26ft) -high sculpture was commissioned in 1972 by the Singapore Tourism Board as a welcome figure to visitors. It is de rigueur to come here to photograph the Merlion against the gleaming city skyline. At the other end of One Fullerton are several architecturally unique structures including Customs House, home to several trendy restaurants and bars; The Fullerton Pavilion, a floating dome structure housing the Monti Italian restaurant; and The Fullerton Bay Hotel, a sophisticated hotel with beautiful views of the bay.

Across the water is **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** ❸ [map] (1 Esplanade Drive; www.esplanade.com; charge), the epicentre of Singapore's performing arts scene. The theatre, with its unique architecture, resembling the husk of the thorny durian fruit, finally opened after over a decade of planning. Inside is a 1,600-seat concert hall as well as a 2,000-seat theatre – both with exceptional acoustics. Local and international artists perform year-round.

You can take a **bumboat** or river taxi (www.rivercruise.com.sg) from any of the jetties near Raffles' Landing Site, Merlion Park, Boat Quay, Esplanade and Clarke Quay for a narrated tour. A bumboat ride offers an excellent view of the city skyline as the boat chugs into **Marina Bay** ❹ [map] , an inner harbour created by massive land reclamation projects that include Collyer Quay to the south, and the area to the north where the Esplanade and **Suntec City** stand.

BAY BUZZ

The reclaimed Marina Bay area bordering the waterfront is another exciting place. Located here is the Marina Bay Financial Centre, an extension of the CBD, and the lush Gardens by the Bay. Anchoring this area is the massive S$5 billion integrated resort, Marina Bay Sands (www.marinabaysands.com) topped by the iconic garden, Sands Skypark. This mega leisure, entertainment and hospitality complex features a casino, luxury hotel, convention facilities, theatres, and restaurants helmed by celebrity chefs.

POPEYES

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
The Singapore Flyer

One of the many 'engineering wonders' in this area is the 200m (656ft) **Sands Skypark**, a unique structure designed by architect Moshe Safdie, which crowns the three Marina Bay Sands hotel towers. Perched on top of these towers are a sweeping 1.2-hectare (3-acre) tropical park with landscaped gardens, an observation deck and an infinity pool with amazing views. It's not just about entertainment here – the integrated resort also boasts an **Art Science Museum** ❺ [map] (www.marinabaysands.com; charge). The enormous lotus-shaped building houses galleries exhibiting art, science, media, technology, design and architecture. Another engineering masterpiece is the world's first double-helix curved bridge, which allows pedestrians to walk from Marina Bay Sands to the other side of the waterfront where luxury hotels are located. To the west of the East Coast Parkway lies **Gardens by the Bay** ❻ [map] (18 Marina Gardens Drive; www.gardensbythebay.com.sg; outdoor gardens free). The 101-hectare (250-acre) park, built on reclaimed land, features two energy-eefficient conservatories: the Flower Dome and the Cloud Forest. The former's controlled environment replicates the cool-dry climate of Mediterranean regions, while the latter boasts the world's tallest indoor waterfall. There are also more than a dozen towering 'Supertrees' that offer shade in the day and glittering light displays at night. The OCBC Skyway that connects two of the Supertrees offers impressive views.

Along this waterfront is another of Singapore's top attractions, the **Singapore Flyer** ❼ [map] (www.singaporeflyer.com; charge). At 165m (541ft), it is the world's third-highest observation wheel, after the Dubai Eye and High-Roller in Las Vegas. The ride, taking 30 minutes, affords stunning views of the city. You can even book a meal for two in one of the capsules which can fit up to 28 passengers each. At the foot of the wheel is a 1960s-themed food street, set up to lure local diners and tourists. Within walking distance is a large area where the Singapore Formula 1 night race takes place annually in September. Nearby, too, is Suntec City, a business, convention and shopping complex known for its colossal **Fountain of Wealth**.

Jonathan Koh/Apa Publications
Boat Quay is a great dining and drinking area

BOAT QUAY AND UPRIVER

Raffles originally ordered the creation of five embankments along the Singapore River by reclamation. Collyer Quay and Raffles Quay were built south of the river's mouth; Boat Quay, Clarke Quay and Robertson Quay lined the river inland through the heart of the city.

Boat Quay ❽ [map] runs on the southwest side of the river between the Cavenagh Bridge and Elgin Bridge. Completed in 1929 to connect the Chinese and Indian communities, it was a landfill project that handled most of Singapore's trade. The river's commercial traffic is now gone, but Boat Quay is enjoying a second lease of life with restaurants and drinking holes in its conservation shophouses, popular with tourists and executives from the nearby Raffles Place.

Upriver from Boat Quay, on the north bank, is **Clarke Quay** ❾ [map] , the site of scores of 19th-century godowns built by colonialists and Chinese merchants. Several of the latter became millionaires through their trading

businesses at Clarke Quay. The old godowns have been converted into trendy restaurants and pubs.

Most tourists don't venture as far as **Robertson Quay**, a little further upriver, but it is a pleasant shoreline walk from Clarke and Boat quays and is home to a cluster of international restaurants on the riverfront. This former warehouse area is the largest of the three quays and is frequented by expats and residents who live nearby. The **Singapore Tyler Print Institute** (41 Robertson Quay; www.stpi.com.sg; free) houses a fine collection of printed works, a printmaking workshop and a paper mill. In the vicinity are good restaurants, bars and cafés, and the **Singapore Repertory Theatre** (20 Merbau Road; www.srt.com.sg; charge). A block or so inland from Boat Quay en route to Chinatown is **Lau Pa Sat** (18 Raffles Quay; www.laupasat.sg), Singapore's most famous hawker market, housed in a stunning, renovated Victorian building.

CIVIC DISTRICT

For decades, visitors to downtown Singapore have referred to the area north of the lower Singapore River as the Colonial District, and for good reason. This is where many of the colonial-era buildings and museums stand. Raffles had assigned the north side of the river for the British from the beginning, ordering the building of offices, banks, hotels, churches and clubs there. He even built his house on the top of Fort Canning Hill. The leading colonial architects of the time were George Coleman, who consulted with Raffles on many designs, and John Bidwell, who brought neo-Renaissance plans to the Raffles Hotel, the Goodwood Park Hotel, the Victoria Theatre and many other buildings. Fortunately, many of these buildings in what has been renamed the **Civic District**, roughly the area between the Dhoby Ghaut and City Hall MRT stations, have been preserved.

PRESERVATION AND DESTRUCTION

When Singapore achieved independence in 1965, the economy was in a shambles. Like every developing nation, Singapore put modernisation and economic progress on the front burner; anything that stood in the way, from historic neighbourhoods to colonial architecture, was simply razed. By the 1970s, Singapore was on its way to achieving spectacular prosperity, but it

had obliterated much of its past and visitors complained that it lacked character and colour.

By the 1980s, Singapore began to heed its critics. Historic temples, office buildings, Peranakan mansions, shophouses and godowns were frequently spared demolition and restored with grace instead.

By the late 1980s, the government focused on four areas for conservation (Boat Quay, Little India, Kampong Glam and Chinatown). More areas have been added since. For some, these efforts at preservation have come too late; others felt the preservation schemes have too often been directed by commercial, rather than aesthetic, considerations. Have Singapore's conservation measures transformed the city into a Disneyesque museum, or have they rescued outstanding architectural treasures from neglect? You decide.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
St Andrew's Cathedral

ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL

Rising above the City Hall MRT Station and accessed via North Bridge Road in an expanse of greenery is **St Andrew's Cathedral** ⑩ [map] (www.cathedral.org.sg; free). A gazetted monument, the church owes its smooth white surface to the unique plaster that was used by Indian convict labourers. Called Madras *chunam*, it was made of egg white, eggshell, lime, sugar, coconut husk and water, and it gave the building a polished finish. This is the second place of worship on the premises. The original, which was designed in Palladian style by Coleman, was twice struck by lightning and demolished in 1852. The present cathedral, in the style of an early Gothic abbey and designed by Ronald MacPherson, was consecrated in 1862. The gleaming white exterior contrasts with the dark pews inside, with sunlight filtering through the stained-glass windows in the morning.

NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

If you exit the church premises onto St Andrew's Road and cross Colemen Street, you will come face to face with the **former City Hall**, built in ornate Neoclassical style in 1929. This was where the Japanese surrendered to the British in 1945 and where Lee Kuan Yew declared Singapore's independence from British rule in 1959. The **old Supreme Court**, built in 1939, stands next to the former City Hall. It is one of Singapore's last classical edifices with Corinthian columns.

In 2005, it was announced that the City Hall and the old Supreme Court would be converted into the new **National Gallery Singapore** ⑪ [map] (1 St Andrew's Road; www.nationalgallery.sg; charge), which opened to the public in late 2015. The buildings have been cleverly and sensitively linked together via two bridges, glass roofing and a new basement level. The National Gallery is currently the largest museum in Singapore, showcasing modern and contemporary Singaporean and Southeast Asian art from the 19th century to the present day. The magnificent collection of 8,000 artworks tells the story of this incredibly diverse region. It is displayed in two main galleries: the DBS Singapore Gallery and the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery. There are also several research galleries, temporary exhibition spaces and inhouse restaurants including the stylish **Courtyard Café and Lounge** on the ground floor.

The Supreme Court of Singapore is now housed in the shiny glass-and-steel **new Supreme Court** building (1 Supreme Court Lane), behind the National Gallery. There is an observation deck on the 8th floor and a gallery on level one that traces Singapore's legal history (www.supremecourt.gov.sg; free).

Across the street from these buildings is a large field known as the **Padang** (Malay for 'field'), where Raffles planted the British flag and ordered the ground cleared. It has long been the site of cricket matches for the members-only **Singapore Cricket Club**, founded in 1852. The club building stands on one side of the Padang, where the Japanese military rounded up the entire European population of Singapore for interrogation in 1942.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Fort Canning Hill

ARMENIAN STREET

The **Armenian Church** ⓬ [map] (60 Hill Street; http://armeniansinasia.org; free) stands at the head of Coleman Street. Built in 1835, the church is Singapore's oldest; it is also George Coleman's masterwork. Constructed using Indian convict labour, it served refugees fleeing the war between Russia and Turkey. The churchyard contains the graves of a few of Singapore's most famous Armenian residents: the Sarkies brothers, who built Raffles Hotel, and Agnes Joachim, who discovered the orchid that would be named as Singapore's national flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim. Round the corner from

the Armenian Church, at 39 Armenian Street, is the **Peranakan Museum** ⓭ [map] (www.peranakanmuseum.org.sg; charge). This museum celebrates the Peranakans (early Straits Chinese) who have a hybrid culture that evolved through intermarriage between Chinese men and Malay women.

Also along this quiet stretch is **The Substation** (45 Armenian Street; www.substation.org; see website for ticket info), a centre for artistic experimentation and cutting-edge work, converted from a disused power station. It has a tiny theatre and an equally small gallery that connects to a charming garden overhung with trees. Located in the garden is **Timbre Music Bistro** (www.timbregroup.asia), an atmospheric nook where Singapore bands and musicians take to the stage nightly.

FORT CANNING PARK

Forming the western boundary of the Civic District is **Fort Canning Park** ⓮ [map] , which can be accessed via Canning Rise that adjoins Armenian Street, up a flight of stairs next to Old Hill Street Police Station (MICA Building) on Hill Street.

The hill, once the site of royal palaces built by Malay sultans, was known as Forbidden Hill (Bukit Larangan), for commoners were not allowed there. The ghosts of the sultans were believed to haunt the hill, the curse not broken until British resident William Farquhar cleared the summit and erected a cannon there for defence in the early 19th century. Raffles built a bungalow on the hill in 1822, occupying it for almost a year. Until the British surrendered to the Japanese in World War II, the hill was a military command post.

Shutterstock
The National Museum is Singapore's oldest museum

Today Fort Canning Park has a well-marked trail that makes for a pleasant walk. Begin at the whitewashed Fort Canning Centre, a former army barracks. The oasis of green out front is a venue for arts and music events, such as the annual *Ballet Under The Stars* by the Singapore Dance Theatre, usually held in July. Hotel Fort Canning, to the west, is housed in a beautiful heritage military building constructed in 1926. Other attractions within the park include the **ASEAN Sculpture Garden**, the original **fort gate** and a replica of the 19-hectare (47-acre) **spice garden** that Raffles established in 1822 as the 'experimental and botanical garden' of colonial Singapore. There are all kinds of guided walks available in the park (most on Saturday; some are free; check online at www.nparks.gov.sg).

The main attraction is the **Battle Box** (Visitor Centre, 2 Cox Terrace; www.battlebox.com.sg; guided tours only), which reopened in 2016 after a major makeover. This bomb-proof bunker with 29 rooms and corridors 9m (30ft) underground was where British Lt-General Percival decided to surrender to the Japanese (15 February 1942).

NATIONAL MUSEUM

The **National Museum** ⓯ [map] (www.nationalmuseum.sg; free), at 93 Stamford Road, is housed in one of Singapore's most impressive colonial edifices. A modern glass-and-steel wing features a striking giant glass rotunda on which images depicting Singapore's history are projected at night. The museum has also reinvented itself as a hip space to learn about history with its interactive displays and narratives. Look out for the Singapore History Gallery with some splendid national treasures, from the Singapore Stone, a rock with inscriptions dating back to the 10th century, to 14th-century Majapahit gold ornaments from Fort Canning Hill. The museum also has an interesting line-up of performing and visual arts programmes.

SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM (SAM)

Along Bras Basah Road is the **Singapore Art Museum** ⓰ [map] (www.singaporeartmuseum.sg; free). The colonial structure, dating from the early 1800s, formerly housed St Joseph's Institution, a school set up by Catholic missionaries. The museum's permanent collection is an excellent sampling of works by Southeast Asia's leading artists. It ranks among the finest contemporary art museums in the region (past exhibitions have included works from New York's Guggenheim Museum). Even if not for the artworks, the museum is worth visiting just to see the splendidly restored chapel and the school hall, now called the Glass Hall.

Singapore Tourism Board
Display at the Singapore Art Museum

CHIJMES

CHIJMES (30 Victoria Street; www.chijmes.com.sg; free) – pronounced 'chimes' – is a complex of buildings within a walled enclosure, formerly the Catholic girls' school Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, located at the corner of Victoria Street and North Bridge Road. These buildings, which may well be the most beautiful Christian architectural legacy in Singapore, have been painstakingly restored to their original glory. The chapel, dating from 1903, is the most magnificent. Designed by Father Charles Benedict Nain, a French priest, it is medieval in design and ornamentation. It is now used as a concert hall and a wedding venue.

The 'Gate of Hope' entrance along Bras Basah Road was once where the destitute and desperate left newborn babies in hope that the convent would adopt them. Today merrymakers – and not the impoverished – enter the convent gates as CHIJIMES is now home to restaurants and bars, as well as a handful of boutiques and handicraft shops.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
The Singapore Sling was first created at the Raffles Hotel bar in 1915

Opposite CHIJIMES across Victoria Street is the oldest Roman Catholic church in Singapore, the **Cathedral of the Good Shepherd** ('A' Queen Street; www.cathedral.catholic.sg; free), built in 1846 in Renaissance style with six porticoed entrances and a high wooden ceiling.

THE RAFFLES

Located diagonally across from CHIJIMES is the **Raffles Hotel** ⓱ [map] (1 Beach Road; www.raffles.com), perhaps the most famous hotel in Asia. The hotel recently underwent a massive two-year restoration programme and was fully reopened again in 2019 with new features, including Writers Bar. Raffles began as a small hotel in 1887 founded by the Armenian Sarkies brothers. The writer Joseph Conrad was among the first to check in, followed in 1889 by Rudyard Kipling, who praised the food but not the accommodation. The Sarkies then went on an upgrading rampage, adding the Tiffin Room, Palm Court and the Billiard Room by 1902.

Monarchs, celebrities and famous writers, including Charlie Chaplin, Somerset Maugham and John Lennon, have stayed at the Raffles. But by the 1990s the hotel was suffering from neglect and decay, leading the government to declare it a national monument and provide for a massive facelift. The restoration involved years of tracking down original plans and finding skilled craftsmen to repair and recreate the original fittings.

Nearly everyone who comes to Singapore visits the Raffles. Its **Bar & Billiard Room** is probably the most romantic spot for a drink, and the courtyard is good for open-air dining. And while the **Long Bar** may be nothing like the atmospheric original (despite ceiling fans and peanut shells on the floor), it is still a good place to knock back a Singapore Sling, the famous gin-based cocktail that was first concocted here in the early 1900s.

Exit the Raffles Hotel onto Seah Street to a quirky find. At No. 26 is the **Mint Museum of Toys** (www.emint.com; charge), with a nostalgic collection of rare toys from all over the world spanning more than 100 years.

CHINATOWN

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles drew the outlines of Singapore's Chinatown in 1822, just after the first boatloads of immigrants from southern China landed at the mouth of the river. The Chinese found hard-labour jobs along the river; their fresh water source was a well on Spring Street, and gangs, triads and opium dens became a way of life. **Chinatown** ⓲ [map] then, as now, occupied a large area immediately southwest of the Singapore River. The Hokkien traders settled along today's Telok Ayer and Amoy streets, the Teochew fishermen congregated near Boat Quay, and the Cantonese merchants built shophouses along Pagoda and Temple streets.

North Bridge Road and Eu Tong Sen Street are the main thoroughfares through the heart of Chinatown, lined by shopping arcades like the **People's Park Complex** (1 Park Road), which has fashion stores and old-style fabric tenants, and the **Yue Hwa Emporium** (70 Eu Tong Sen Street; www.yuehwa.com.sg) with all things Chinese, from silk to traditional medicines. The latter occupies the building of the former Great Southern Hotel, once considered the grand old lady of Chinatown. Diagonally across Yue Hwa is **Chinatown Point** (www.chinatownpoint.com.sg), towering above the Chinatown MRT Station. There are many mid-priced food and fashion outlets as well as a few travel agencies.

CHINATOWN HERITAGE CENTRE

Begin your exploration in Pagoda Street, where the **Chinatown Heritage Centre** ⑲ [map] (No. 48; www.chinatownheritagecentre.com.sg) is located in a conservation shophouse. It showcases the area's cultural heritage and includes a re-creation of the cramped living conditions of early residents.

LOVE POTIONS

Aphrodisiacs are something of a Singapore obsession. **Eu Yan Sang Medical Hall** (269 South Bridge Road, opposite the Sri Mariamman Temple; www.euyansang.com.sg) offers a selection of the best in Chinese love potions, from deer penis wine to seahorse tonic. Likewise, any other pharmacy in Chinatown worth its ginseng will stock a fertile line of sexual herbs, tonics and antlers to lift a flagging libido. Along **Arab Street**, Malay medicinal houses favour onions for prolonging sexual stamina. Indian pharmacists, relying on the Tantric traditions and the Kama Sutra, will boil asparagus and treacle in milk and ghee, spiced with liquorice. You'll find a storehouse of the ingredients used in Indian aphrodisiacs at the **Mustafa Centre** on Syed Alwi Road in Little India.

Jonathan Koh/Apa Publications
Display at the Chinatown Heritage Centre

Pagoda Street joins **South Bridge Road**, the traditional area for Cantonese merchants specialising in herbal medicines and gold jewellery. Flanking this road are several sights of interest to the visitor, including two sights that are not at all Chinese. The **Jamae Mosque** (218 South Bridge Road; www.masjidjamaechulia.sg) has distinctive pagoda-like minarets rarely seen in mosque architecture. Its unique design was perhaps a gesture of deference to the predominantly Chinese neighbourhood. The mosque was constructed in 1826 by Muslim Chulia immigrants who came from South India's Coromandel Coast.

Adjacent to the mosque is **Sri Mariamman Temple** ⓴ [map] (244 South Bridge Road). Dedicated to goddess Mariamman, who is known for curing serious illnesses, this is Singapore's most important and oldest Hindu temple, dating from 1827. Its *gopuram* tower is decorated with figures of Hindu gods. The interior is noted for its ceiling paintings and the temple is the site for the Thimithi ceremony (October/November) during which devotees walk on burning coals.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Trengganu Street in Chinatown

CHINATOWN STREETS

The best time to visit Chinatown is January/February when its streets are adorned with lights and bright-red decorations to usher in the Chinese New Year and when crowds throng its bazaar for New Year goodies. Along **Mosque Street**, where Hakka immigrants once traded paper and scrap metal, you'll find a number of shophouses now housing Mainland Chinese-style restaurants dishing-up Sichuan and Hunan fare. The **Chinatown Night Market** (daily 10am–10pm) has about 200 stalls lining Pagoda, Trengganu and Sago streets. A stroll down **Temple Street** takes one past Chinese souvenir shops (with lacquerware, silks, Tiger Balm ointments) to **Trengganu Street**, now an outdoor street vendors' mall but previously an opera street with theatre stages and brothels.

Trengganu Street cuts through **Smith Street**, where you will find the fully pedestrianised **Chinatown Food Street** (www.chinatownfoodstreet.sg). Post renovation, the stretch is now equipped with a massive glass shelter and fans to keep the area cool and comfortable for diners. There are five shophouse

restaurants as well as 20 hawker stalls selling a huge range of local fare like Hokkien noodles, *char kway teow* (fried-rice noodles), oyster omelette and barbecued chicken wings.

Trengganu Street ends at **Sago Street**, another colourful shopping area with Chinese medical halls, rattan weavers and pastry shops. Between Sago Street and Sago Lane is the **Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum** (www.buddhatoothrelictemple.org.sg; free). Inspired by the Tang dynasty, this modern temple houses religious artworks and Buddhist texts. The temple's centrepiece is one dogged by much controversy – a sacred tooth belonging to the Buddha. Only taken out for viewing on Vesak Day and Chinese New Year, the tooth's authenticity has been questioned by several Buddhist scholars. Behind the temple there's the China Town Visitor Centre (2 Banda Street) with useful maps and information about the area including a visual guide to the different styles of shophouses in Singapore.

Snack time

A must-try in Chinatown is *bak kwa*, a delicious sweet, barbecued meat. Just follow your nose to one of the many shops selling this addictive snack. The most popular are Lim Chee Guan at 203 New Bridge Road and Bee Cheng Hiang at 69 Pagoda Street.

TANJONG PAGAR DISTRICT

From Sago Lane, turn right and walk to the corner of Tanjong Pagar and Neil roads, where the stately **Jinriksha Station** stands. Rickshaw proprietors once parked their two-wheeled vehicles here. The station, built in 1903 in the classical style, is crowned by a dome. Jinrikshas were the main means of transport in Singapore in the early 1900s before they were replaced by three-wheeled trishaws in the 1940s. The rickshaw coolies lived around the station, renting beds in tiny cubicles in Chinatown.

Tanjong Pagar started out as a Malay fishing village. In the 1830s, the land around it was turned into a nutmeg plantation. The area became a thriving commercial hub, but by the 1960s the neighbourhood had fallen into disrepair and would have met the wrecker's ball if it hadn't been for the government's conservation drive. It soon became an archetype for how the remainder of historic Singapore would be restored. Today the **Tanjong Pagar Conservation District** has over 190 meticulously restored shophouses, in pastel hues with wooden window shutters and high-beamed ceilings, along Neil Road, Murray

Terrace, Craig Road and Duxton Hill Road. Offices, restaurants and pubs now call these shophouses home.

Further down along Neil Road past Kreta Ayer Road is the once notorious **Keong Saik Road**, a red-light district that has now been gentrified. Many of the area's splendid shophouses in the Chinese Baroque architectural style have been restored and converted into boutique hotels such as **Hotel 1929** (No. 50; www.hotel1929.com), which is largely responsible for making this strip hip. Trendy bars and restaurants now share space with brothels and scruffy coffeeshops.

SINGAPORE CITY GALLERY

Opposite the Jinriksha Station across Maxwell Road is a local favourite, **Maxwell Food Centre**, one of Singapore's oldest hawker centres. Snaking queues are a regular sight at lunchtime.

Beside the food centre across Kadayanallur Street is the URA Centre with the **Singapore City Gallery** (45 Maxwell Road; www.ura.gov.sg/uol/citygallery; free), whose key attraction is a massive model of the city. Spread over two storeys are exhibits, interactive displays and touch-screen terminals as well as audio-visual programmes about this efficient city.

Kadayanallur Street leads uphill to **Ann Siang Road** but not before passing **The Scarlet**, a swanky boutique hotel with dramatic interiors (33 Erskine Road; www.thescarlethotel.com). Just around the corner you'll find **Ann Siang House by The Unlimited Collection** (28 Ann Siang Rd; https://bit.ly/44dT3kE), another luxurious hotel housed in a restored heritage building.

CLUB STREET

Ann Siang Road adjoins **Club Street**, once home to trade associations and the haunt of letter-writers for hire. The area is filled with finely restored shophouses (as well as a few colourful unrestored specimens). Their architectural style is not entirely Chinese. The carved decorations and swinging *pintu pagar* doors are Malay in origin, the Georgian windows and Art Deco touches are European, and the tiled roofs are strictly in the Chinese style. This area is today lined with fashionable bars and bistros as well as two established Italian restaurants: **Senso Ristorante and Bar** (21 Club Street; www.senso.sg) and **Da Paolo** (80 Club Street; www.dapaolo.com.sg).

Jack Hollingsworth/Apa Publications
Streetside calligrapher in Chinatown

TELOK AYER STREET

Club Street rises and dips into Upper Cross Street, the location of **Far East Square** and **China Square Central**, whose eateries and cafés are often filled with office workers during lunch time. Far East Square is worth a stroll for its interesting shophouses and entrance gates that represent the five elements that make up the Chinese universe.

Far East Organisation
Far East Square's 'Fire' gate

On the east side of Far East Square is **Telok Ayer Street**, which has a cluster of national monuments, beginning with the **Fuk Tak Chi Museum** (No. 76; www.fareastsquare.com.sg; free). Formerly the Fuk Tak Chi Temple, built by Hakka and Cantonese immigrants in 1824 and dedicated to Tua Pek Kong, the Taoist God of Prosperity, the museum has a collection of 200 artefacts, including a Chinese gold belt, abacus board and even a rental expiry notice from early Chinatown residents. A little down the street is **Ying Fo Fui Kun** (No. 98), a Hakka clan building established in 1822, with traditional Chinese architectural elements such as carved beams and pillars. Further along are three places of worship. First up is the **Nagore Durgha Shrine** (No. 140; http://singaporenagoredargah.com), built between 1828 and 1830 by Muslims from southern India. Designated a national monument in 1974, but later closed due to concerns about its structure, the building finally reopened in 2011 as an Indian-Muslim heritage centre.

THIAN HOCK KENG TEMPLE

Beside the shrine is **Telok Ayer Green**, a tiny park with life-sized bronze figures depicting scenes from the past. Steps away is the **Thian Hock Keng Temple** ㉑ [map] , the **Temple of Heavenly Bliss** (No. 158; www.thianhockkeng.com.sg), built between 1839 and 1842 by the first Chinese immigrants, who dedicated this elaborate shrine to their protector, Ma Chu Poh, Goddess of the Sea. It has granite pillars from China, blue tiles from Holland and cast-iron railings from Scotland. Although the main altar is Taoist, a rear chamber is dedicated to Guan Yin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy.

The last temple on Telok Ayer Street is **Al-Abrar Mosque** (No. 192), known as the Indian (or Chulia) Mosque. It is one of the oldest in Singapore.

ART AND DESIGN

Follow the road past the **Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church** on your left. Cut through Telok Ayer Park to the Red Dot Traffic building for a stopover at the **Red Dot Design Museum** (28 Maxwell Road; www.museum.red-dot.sg; free). Run by the German body that presents the prestigious Red Dot design award, the museum exhibits sleek products from around the world.

LITTLE INDIA

Among the first Indian settlers were 120 assistants and soldiers who sailed to Singapore in 1819 with Raffles. They first congregated in Chulia Street, the original Indian quarter. But as cattle raising expanded along the Rochor River to the north, Indians settled in an area bisected by Serangoon Road, which is now known as **Little India** ㉒ [map] . Hindus are in the majority among Indians here and Tamil Muslims are well represented, but Chinese make up almost three quarters of Little India's population. This is perhaps Singapore's most colourful downtown neighbourhood with lively backstreets and a strong ethnic flavour.

SERANGOON ROAD

For a walking tour of Little India, start at the **Little India Arcade** (48 Serangoon Road) between Campbell Lane and Hastings Road, opposite the fresh-produce market **Tekka Centre** (665 Buffalo Road). The arcade has several shops selling saris and *cholis* (short-waisted blouses) as well as medicines, betel nuts, carvings, brassware and more. A branch of one of Singapore's most famous South Indian restaurants, the **Banana Leaf Apolo** (for more information, click here), is located here.

From Little India Arcade you can wander up Serangoon Road and explore its colourful side streets. Five-foot ways, which are covered corridors that front shophouses, run along **Campbell Lane**; shops here sell woodcarvings, furniture, musical instruments and flower garlands. At the end of the street stands the **Indian Heritage Centre** (www.indianheritage.gov.sg/en; charge). Boasting some 3,000 square metres of museum space, the iconic facade is said to represent Indian stepwell. **Dunlop Street** has backpacker inns as well as small grocery stores. A few blocks down at 41 Dunlop Street (near the Perak Street junction) is the **Abdul Gafoor Mosque**. Most Singaporean Indians are Hindu, but Muslim Indians congregate here every Friday. You can visit the mosque (except for the prayer hall) if you are dressed respectfully. The present brick structure, completed in 1907, features a blend of South Indian and Moorish architectural elements such as arches, onion-shaped domes and intricate ornamentation. Past Dunlop Street, where Upper Dickson Rd branches off the main drag, there's a cluster of Jain vegan restaurants to satisfy herbivore travellers.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Browsing in Little India

SRI VEERAMAKALIAMMAN TEMPLE

A little further up Serangoon Road, next to Belilios Road, is the **Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** (141 Serangoon Road; www.srivkt.org), constructed by Bengalis in 1855. This is one of Singapore's finest Hindu shrines. Dedicated to Kali, the Hindu Goddess of Power, it is packed with devotees on the Hindu holy days of Tuesdays and Fridays. They often break a coconut before entering to denote the breaking of their ego. Cracked shells are tossed into the aluminium receptacles under the *gopuram* tower. The interior is interesting for several Hindu symbols it employs: fresh coconut and mango leaves above the entrance are for purity and welcome; the lotus represents human striving for spiritual perfection; the banana offerings indicate abundance.

SRI SRINIVASA PERUMAL TEMPLE

Near the Farrer Park MRT Station, at 397 Serangoon Road, is another national monument, the **Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple** ㉓ [map] (www.sspt.org.sg). Dating from 1855, it has a vast prayer hall that honours Krishna (also known as Perumal), one of the incarnations of Vishnu, the supreme Hindu god. The temple is topped by a five-tier *gopuram* tower, donated by P. Govindasamy Pillai, an early Indian migrant made good.

Day of rest

On Sundays, throngs of workers from the Indian subcontinent hang out in Little India on their rest day. Traffic can slow to a crawl, and the streets and shops are packed to the gills.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES

On nearby Race Course Road, which runs parallel to the west of Serangoon Road, is the **Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple** ㉔ [map] (No. 366), better known as the Temple of 1,000 Lights. This Buddhist shrine, maintained by Thai monks, is one of the most popular religious shrines in Singapore. Its centrepiece is the seated Buddha statue, 15m (49ft) tall. It is surrounded by bulbs that light up every time a donation is made. Several Hindu statues and two bright yellow tigers are posted as guards outside.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple

The temple across the road, at 371 Race Course Road, is **Leong San Buddhist Temple** (Dragon Mountain Temple; www.leongsanseetemple.com; donations welcome), a less fanciful place of worship that dates back to the late 1800s, dedicated to Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy. It also has an image of Confucius at its altar and is thus popular with parents who bring their children to pray for success in examinations.

KAMPONG GLAM

Named after the *gelam* trees that once grew here, the **Kampong Glam** district (north of the Civic District and the Singapore River) was the historic seat of the Malay sultans. It was settled in the early days by Muslims from the Malay Peninsula and the Bugis from Indonesia. Even today this neighbourhood has maintained a Malay character.

Javad Namazie
Colourful shops on Haji Lane

ARAB STREET

Arab Street ❼❸❹❼ [map] is the traditional home of Singapore's textile dealers and there are still many small silk and batik stores as well as sarong shops and tailors here. Leather goods, caneware, fishing gear and shiny metalwork are also for sale in the shophouses and make for an interesting browse. Go early as most shops close after 5pm.

SULTAN MOSQUE

Kampong Glam's leading attraction is the **Sultan Mosque** ❼❸❼❽ [map] (3 Muscat Road; www.sultanmosque.sg), located between Arab Street and North Bridge Road at the end of Bussorah Street. It is impressive with a massive onion-shaped golden dome and corner minarets. A national monument that dates back to 1924, this is Singapore's largest mosque; visitors are welcome to view (but not enter) its grand prayer hall.

MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

The **Malay Heritage Centre** (85 Sultan Gate; www.malayheritage.org.sg; free) is housed in the large compound of **Istana Kampong Gelam**, the former residence of the son of the first sultan of Singapore, dating back to the 1840s.

To the left of the compound's main gate is the Yellow Mansion or **Gedung Kuning**, the former home of Tengku Mahmoud, grandson of Sultan Hussein. Malay entrepreneur and philanthropist Haji Yusoff bought Gedung Kuning in 1912 and his family owned the place until 1999 when the Singapore Government acquired it.

KAMPONG GLAM SHOPPING

At 44 Kandahar Street is **Bumbu** (www.bumbu.sg), a Thai-Indonesian restaurant filled with an eclectic collection of rare antiques sourced from various Singaporean homes. Head back to **Bussorah Mall** for a spot of souvenir shopping. **Jamal Kazura Aromatics Store** (21 Bussorah Street; www.jamalkazura.com) has a fine display of decanters and alcohol-free perfumes for sale, and **Habib Leather & Crafts** (44 Bussorah Street) sells handicrafts and leather goods.

Drinking spots

Kampong Glam has several hip bars worth checking out. **Blu Jaz** (11 Bali Lane; www.blujazcafe.net) features evening jam sessions by local musicians. **Maison Ikkoku** (20 Kandahar Street; www.maison-ikkoku.net) is famous for its bespoke cocktails.

Continue down on **Haji Lane** , where the old mixes with the new and funky. This stretch is lined with independent cafés, bars and boutiques such as **The Salad Shop** (No. 25/27; www.thesaladshop.com.sg), **Vintagewknd** (41 Haji Lane; www.vintagewknd.com) and vinyl store **Musicology Records** at no. 66.

MORE HISTORIC MOSQUES

Right at the corner of Jalan Sultan and Victoria Street is the **Malabar Jamaath Mosque** (471 Victoria Street; www.malabar.org.sg), famous for its blue tilework. Northeast of the Sultan Mosque, at 4001 Beach Road, is the **Hajjah Fatimah Mosque** (www.masjidhajjahfatimah.sg), built in 1846 by the Malay

wife of a Bugis merchant as a private residence. Its remarkable architecture mixes European and Chinese influences and it has a Malay-style minaret that resembles the spire of a cathedral. The minaret is off the plumb, leading some to dub it the 'leaning tower of Singapore'.

BUGIS

Bugis Street, south of the Arab Street area, was Singapore's most notorious after-dark hangout until it was razed in 1985 to make way for the Bugis MRT station. Now, in place of a street internationally renowned for sex workers and drag queens, there is **Bugis Junction**, a shopping mall with a glassed-over, air-conditioned shopping street and the adjoining hotel, InterContinental Singapore (80 Middle Road; www.ihg.com). Next to the hotel is the stark-white **National Library** (100 Victoria Street; www.nlb.gov.sg; free). It houses a reference library, restful outdoor gardens, a café, an art exhibition space and the Drama Centre performing arts theatre. Linking Bugis Junction via an overhead bridge is Bugis+, a mall targeted at a younger clientele.

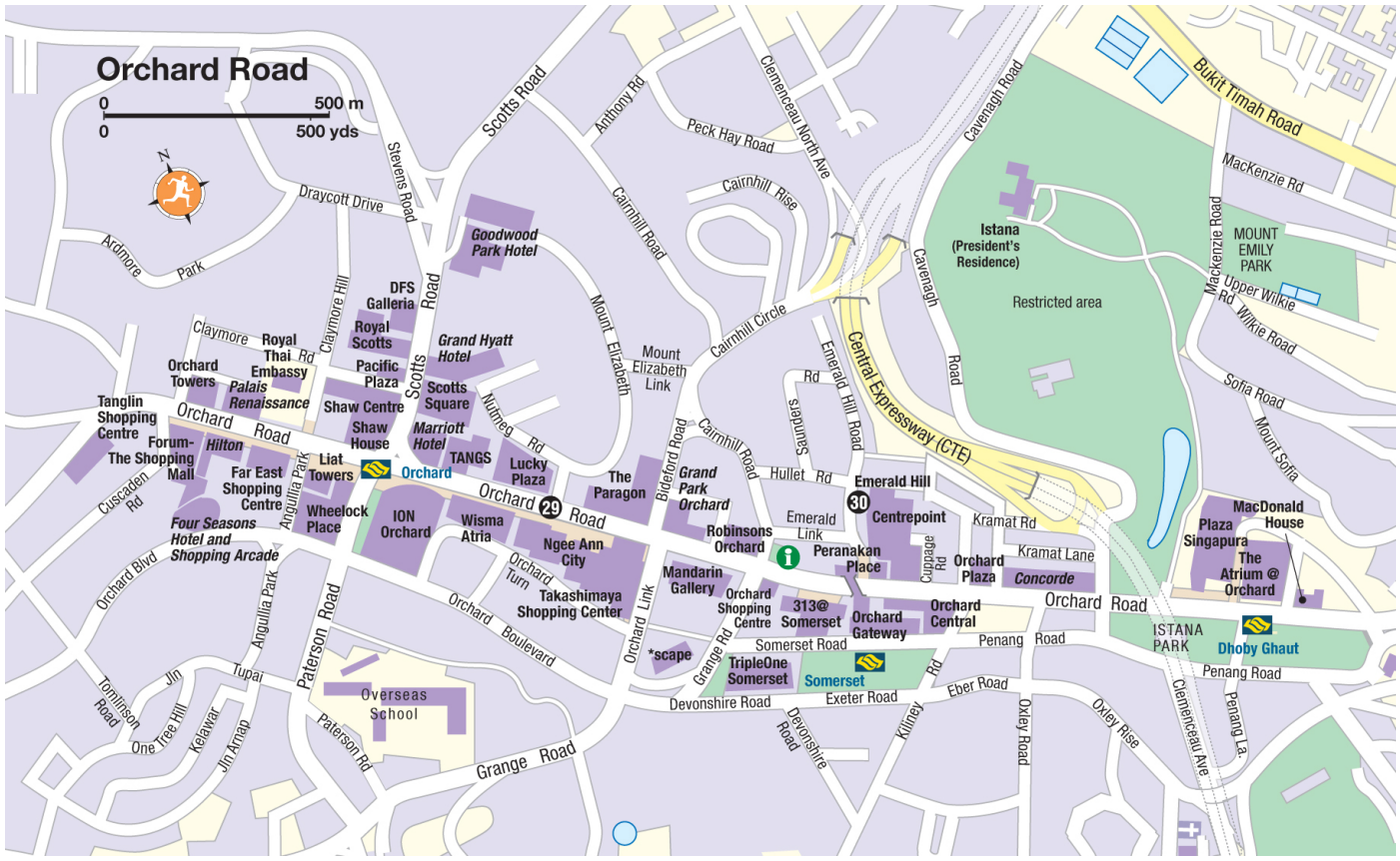
Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Bugis Street Market

Across Victoria Street is the lively **Bugis Street Market** ㉗ [map] in the Bugis Village complex. Crammed with over 600 stalls, the market offers value finds such as look-alike Oakleys, cheap, fashionable streetwear and hawker food.

WATERLOO STREET

Follow Rochor Road by the side of the Bugis Village complex and turn into the pedestrianised section of **Waterloo Street** ㉘ [map] . On any given day, this area teems with people who come to pray at the Chinese **Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple** (No.178) and the Hindu **Sri Krishnan Temple** (No.152).

The Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, Guan Yin, presides in the former. Built in 1895 and refurbished in 1982, the temple is a highlight not for its architecture but rather for the glimpses of colourful local life it offers. The temple became a place of refuge for many during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore (1942–1945).Pensive supplicants inside the temple kneel before the goddess in prayer. Some shake containers with numbered bamboo fortune sticks until one falls out, then consult with the fortune tellers who stake out stalls outside along with the traditional medicine and flower sellers. From lottery numbers to prospects for offspring, the goddess tries to unravel everything about the future.



ORCHARD ROAD

The **Orchard Road** ㉙ [map] area, roughly from the beginning of Plaza Singapura near the Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station all the way to the end of Tanglin Road near the Botanic Gardens, is Singapore's best-known shopping and dining district, though it has some sights worth seeing too. The name of this glitzy road goes back to the 1840s when Captain William Scott established his nutmeg and pepper plantation on the slopes. Tigers roamed the hills along Orchard Road until 1846; fifty years later, the land was tamed and some of Singapore's richest families had built their estates and terraced homes here.

The most notable cluster of these historic residences is on **Emerald Hill** ㉚ [map] , the site of one of Singapore's first and most impressive preservation projects. A stroll up Emerald Hill Road from Peranakan Place is a walk into Singapore's colonial past. The terraced houses were built between 1902 and 1930 on the site of a nutmeg farm using a plethora of Malay, Chinese and European styles. The original owners were wealthy Peranakan, a mixed race that evolved through intermarriage between immigrant Chinese men and local Malay women from the 17th to 19th centuries. Pastel hues, fancy plaster work, ornate grills, shuttered windows, bat-shaped openings, tiled overhangs and carved wood characterise many of these graceful exteriors. Among the houses

are a few galleries, restaurants and pubs, which allow a glimpse of the colonial-period interiors, but most of the restored terraced houses and shophouses are private residences. The carved swing doors *(pintu pagar)* are designed for ventilation and privacy.

Orchard Road is also the address of the **Istana**, the Singapore president's official residence. In the late 1860s Indian convicts did the heavy work on this government estate, which is closed to visitors except on public holidays such as Chinese New Year's Day, Hari Raya Puasa, Labour Day, Deepavali and National Day (www.istana.gov.sg). If you are there on the first Sunday of the month, you can catch the changing of the guard at the gates at 6pm.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Chinese Baroque houses on Emerald Hill

Further away but more accessible is the **Goodwood Park Hotel** (22 Scotts Road; www.goodwoodparkhotel.com), a national landmark built in 1900 as the Teutonia Club for German colonialists. Resembling a Rhineland castle with an eight-sided Bavarian tower, it was occupied by the Japanese during the war and later served as the War Crimes Court. Celebrities who have spent the night here include Anna Pavlova and John Wayne.

GEYLANG SERAI AND KATONG

When the British transformed Singapore into a trading colony, many Malays took up residence in **Geylang Serai** ㉛ [map] , east of the city centre. The district still has a strong Malay character, complete with old bungalows, terraced houses and Peranakan shophouses, especially along Joo Chiat and Koon Seng roads near the Paya Lebar MRT Station. Singapore's largest red-light district and a cluster of 'love hotels' are located in the *lorong* (alleys) here. There is also the colourful **Geylang Serai Market**, located in a double-storey building on Jalan Turi that was designed to simulate the rustic quality of the old Malay kampong houses. This market is at its busiest during the Ramadan month and just before Hari Raya Puasa.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
East Coast Seafood Centre

KATONG

North of Geylang Serai, further along Joo Chiat Road, is the **Katong** ㉜ [map] suburb area. It is historically the heart of the Peranakan community and many of the shophouses here, combining Chinese, Peranakan and European architectural styles, have been conserved. Katong is also a foodie's haven, where you can find some of the best Peranakan restaurants in Singapore. The main spine to explore is East Coast Road. You can spend a day just sampling the many delicious offerings, from the famous spicy Katong *laksa* noodle dish (try one of the stalls at the corner of Ceylon and East Coast Road) to *kaya* (traditional coconut custard jam) toast at the nostalgic **Chin Mee Chin Confectionery** (204 East Coast Road; www.chinmeechin.sg) and homemade rice dumplings at **Kim Choo Kueh Chang** (109 East Coast Road; www.kimchoo.com). To see precious collections of Peranakan family heirlooms, intricately beaded slippers and jewellery, head to **Katong Antique House** (208 East Coast Road; charge) and **Rumah Bebe** (113 East Coast Road; www.rumahbebe.com).

EAST COAST

Many people come to the East Coast for recreation (watersports, cycling, jogging and rollerblading) and dining. The **East Coast Seafood Centre** (for more information, click here), housing restaurants such as **Jumbo** (www.jumboseafood.com.sg) and **Long Beach** (www.longbeachseafood.com.sg), is incredibly popular, especially for its award-winning chilli crab. Nearby is the beachside **East Coast Lagoon Food Village** where hawker stalls roll out good, cheap local fare - the satay sticks dipped in peanut sauce are particularly worth a try.

ZOOS, PARKS AND GARDENS

Some of Singapore's top attractions are found outside the urbanised centres and downtown Singapore. These include the island's world-renowned zoos, a park devoted to birds, and several nature reserves, which form a much-appreciated break from the city-state's urban landscape. However, that being said, Singapore is one of the greenest cities in the world, known as "garden city".

Jack Hollingsworth/Apa Publications
Chinese Garden pavilions

SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

The **Singapore Botanic Gardens** ㉝ [map] (1 Cluny Road; www.nparks.gov.sg/sbg; free), just west of Orchard Road, is the nearest major green preserve to the downtown district. The 67-hectare (166-acre) site of gardens and jungle forests was opened in 1859 and is the only tropical garden in the world to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

A path begins at Swan Lake, surrounded by palms and rubber trees, then leads past an 1860 bandstand and a topiary garden. The 1.5-hectare (3.7-acre) **Evolution Garden** traces life on earth from 4,600 million years ago till the present day with live exhibits and plant replicas.

A must-visit is the **National Orchid Garden**, located within the Botanic Gardens, which claims to have the world's largest display of Singapore's signature blooms. It has over 1,000 species and 2,000 hybrids of orchids, including Singapore's national flower, the purple Vanda Miss Joaquim, which was first discovered in 1893 by an Armenian immigrant, Agnes Joachim. There

are also numerous ‘VIP’ orchids, named after the many dignitaries who have visited Singapore. Located within this garden is the **Cool House**, which encloses a montane tropical forest. Families can also visit the Jacob Ballas Children’s Garden , designed to help kids under 12 discover more about plants and nature through fun-filled play and exploration. As you pass through the **Visitor’s Centre**, you can pick up a gift at the souvenir shop or grab a bit to eat at Privé Botanic Gardens.

JURONG LAKE GARDENS

This extensive lakeside park includes a wide range of environments including grasslands, streams and waterfront board walks. The centrepiece of the park is the **Chinese Garden** and **Japanese Garden** (1 Chinese Garden Road; free). The Chinese Garden reflects several classical styles and has twin pagodas, arched bridges, an extensive bonsai display, elaborate rock works, a teahouse and even a marble boat like the one in Beijing’s Summer Palace gardens. The garden is decorated with colourful lanterns in September/October for the annual Mid-Autumn Festival. From the Chinese Garden visitors can cross a bridge into the Japanese Garden with its carefully raked Zen rock gardens, stone lanterns, pavilions and pools. Both were temporarily closed at the time of writing and are scheduled to reopen in 2024 after redevelopment.

HAW PAR VILLA

The most Chinese of Singapore’s theme parks is **Haw Par Villa**, also known as Tiger Balm Gardens (262 Pasir Panjang Road; www.hawparvilla.sg; free). This park was opened in 1937 by local millionaire Aw Boon Haw, who built a mansion for his younger brother, Aw Boon Par, on the summit. The Aws made a vast fortune that was based, in large part, on sales of the famous Tiger Balm ointment. The Japanese destroyed the mansion during their occupation (1942–5) and it was never replaced, but the park itself was rebuilt.

The amusement park lining the slopes below the villa is lined with garish and often grotesque statuary, telling stories from classical Chinese mythology, literature and folklore. The statues originally numbered over a thousand and there were scores of colourful and striking tableaux showing fantastic heroes and villains representing aspects of good and evil, engaged in the primal struggles of life and death.

BIRD PARADISE

The largest bird park in Asia, **Bird Paradise** ㉞ [map] (20 Mandai Lake Road; www.mandai.com/en/bird-paradise.html; charge) has replaced what was previously known as Jurong Bird Park. The new site officially opened its doors to the public in May 2023, after relocating to the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, where Night Safari, Singapore Zoo and River Wonders are also based. Spanning 17 hectares (42 acres), Bird Paradise is home to 3,500 birds, representing 400 species, of which 24 percent are under threat. From flamingos to macaws, emus to pelicans, Bird Paradise is sure to delight. It also boasts the world's largest genetic reserve of Hornbills under human care, with over 20 species.

Visitors can enjoy walking through the parks' eight aviaries, each of which reflect some of the world's most diverse habitats from African rainforests to the dry eucalyptus forests of Australia - it's a truly immersive experience. Other exciting attractions in the park include a state-of-the-art penguin reserve, a 20m-tall (66ft) waterfall, two playgrounds and a 2000-seat Sky Amphitheatre which hosts a variety of shows and presentations for the whole family. Bird feeding sessions are also available for children, but you must book ahead.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Ducks at Bird Paradise

BUKIT TIMAH NATURE RESERVE

The **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** ㉟ [map] (177 Hindhede Drive; www.nparks.gov.sg; free), located in the northern part of the island, is easily reached by hopping in a taxi.

This spacious park, occupying 163 hectares (403 acres), harbours Singapore's largest surviving virgin lowland rainforest, native vegetation that once covered most of the island. Bukit Timah is a marvellous place to hike, with a series of well-marked trails winding through the hillsides. Bukit Timah is the name of the park's summit, the highest point in Singapore at a modest 164m (538ft).

Bukit Timah boasts more tree species than the whole of North America. The towering tropical trees provide a canopy for palms, rattans and over 80 species of fern. Flying lemurs, long-tailed macaques, pangolins (spiny anteaters), mouse deer, giant forest ants, banded woodpeckers and tit babblers are sometimes heard but not often seen.

The Visitor Centre at the park entrance has hiking maps and an exhibition on the park's ecosystem. An uphill hike from the centre to the Summit Hut, with its picnic shelter and lookout on stilts, takes under 30 minutes. The four main walking trails (and side trails) lead to valleys and large quarries. There is also a 6km (4-mile) biking trail.

DAIRY FARM NATURE PARK

Just north of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, **the Dairy Farm Nature Park** (100 Dairy Farm Road; https://beta.nparks.gov.sg; free) is an old cow farm and quarry turned natural oasis that abounds with tropical flora and fauna. It is home to the **Wallace Education Centre** (50 Dairy Farm Rd; free), and the **Wallace Trail**, which is dedicated to Alfred Russel Wallace, the other "father" behind the theory of evolution, who spent time in the Malay Archipelago, including Singapore.

MACRITCHIE RESERVOIR PARK

The **MacRitchie Reservoir Park** (www.nparks.gov.sg; free), located in the Central Catchment Nature Reserve along Lornie Road, is another scenic spot for nature lovers. Boardwalks and walking trails, ranging from 3 to 11km (2 to 7 miles), skirt the edge of the reservoir and head through the flourishing forest. The **TreeTop Walk** (www.nparks.gov.sg; free) offers good views of the forest canopy from dizzying heights of up to 25m (82ft). This 250m (820ft) -long

suspension bridge connects the two highest points in the reservoir park. To get there, you must first hike through a 4.5km (3-mile) nature trail. The TreeTop Walk is especially popular at weekends, and with only 30 people allowed on the bridge at any one time, the wait to get on can be long. Go on a weekday to avoid the crowds.

THE FEATHER IN SINGAPORE'S CAP

Although a concrete island of high-rises, Singapore has more than 350 species of birds to delight even the most casual bird-watcher. Early morning, around 7am, is prime spotting time. A good place to start a bird-watching expedition is at the Visitor Centre in the **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve**, where illustrated field guides are for sale. The **Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve** on the northwestern coast has observation blinds by mangroves where there's a breeding colony of herons in residence from August to March. Pulau Ubin, with its mangroves and rainforests, is home to parakeets, owls, kingfishers and hornbills. And from September to March, the white cattle egret takes its winter holiday in Singapore, arriving from as far north as Japan and as far west as France.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Bukit Timah Nature Reserve

SINGAPORE ZOO

The **Singapore Zoo** ㊱ [map] on 80 Mandai Lake Road (www.zoo.com.sg; charge), north of downtown, houses over 2,800 animals from 300 species (29 percent of which are threatened) on its 28 hectares (69 acres).

Its 'open concept' rainforest environment sets it apart from other zoos. Cleverly concealed features, including moats, cascading streams and vegetation, help serve as barriers, although a few glass-fronted enclosures are employed for species that can leap over walls. Some 'lucky' animals, including langurs, lemurs and tamarins, are allowed to roam freely around the zoo.

The zoo also hosts a variety of animal presentations, most of which are held in the **Shaw Foundation Amphitheatre**, where sea lions, reptiles and ponies take their turns on stage. An **Animal Friends Presentation** specially designed to entertain children gets under way at the Animal Buddies Theatre in KidzWorld. Note, too, that many animals, from lions and jaguars to monkeys and Komodo dragons, are fed on a regular schedule (times available online)

and this can often lead to exciting impromptu shows - you may even be able to feed the animals yourself.

Take advantage of the splendid opportunity to have a meal in close proximity to the animals. If you fancy having **Breakfast in the Wild** among species such as orangutans, birds and reptiles (subject to change) book a place on the terrace at Ah Meng Restaurant in advance.

Shutterstock
Orangutans, pongo pygmaeus, Singapore Zoo

To avoid the crowds, visit the zoo in the morning on a weekday. If you are combining a visit with the Night Safari next door, take your zoo tour in the afternoon, three to four hours before the 6pm closing time and then walk over to the Night Safari for dinner before the guided tram tours commence.

RIVER WONDERS

Asia's first and only river-themed wildlife park, **River Wonders** ㊲ [map] (80 Mandai Lake Road; www.mandai.com/en/river-wonders.html; charge), formerly River Safari, houses the largest collection of freshwater vertebrates in the

world; it's home to over 11,000 animal specimens representing approximately 260 species. The park also houses the world's largest freshwater aquarium. Another highlight is the Giant Panda Forest, home to two giant pandas from China. The park is split into different zones including the Congo, Ganges, Mary, Mekong, Nile and Yangtze rivers where you can spot different species. There's also an **Amazon River Quest** with jaguars, Brazilian tapirs and giant anteaters en route.

NIGHT SAFARI

The world's first night zoo, Singapore's **Night Safari** ㊳ [map] (80 Mandai Lake Road; www.mandai.com/en/night-safari.html; charge) is the island nation's top attraction. Covering 35 hectares (87 acres), it is a completely different experience. Beginning at dusk, a series of trams with witty English-speaking narrators aboard encircles the eight geographical zones on a paved road. Passengers can disembark to take a closer look at the animals in their open enclosures by following one of four walking trails (Tasmanian Devil Trail, East Lodge Trail, Leopard Trail and Fishing Cat Trail).

Set in a dense tropical forest, the Night Safari is a subtly lit preserve inhabited by more than 900 animals from about 100 species, of which 41 percent are under threat. More than 90 percent of the animals in the wild are nocturnal, so this is a chance to see how the animals behave after the heat and sunlight have vanished.

Perhaps the most entertaining creatures are the fishing cats, which are slightly larger than domestic felines. These take the plunge to capture trout in a small stream just inches from the pedestrian bridge that passes through their wooded area. The focused, incandescent lighting used to illuminate the animals makes everything visible to humans but does not distract the creatures of the night, who are seemingly unaware of passers-by. Visitors are separated by natural barriers (moats, vegetation, near-invisible wires), and the lighting system resembles moonlight. Cameras are allowed but flash is prohibited. Not to be missed is the interactive **Creatures of the Night** presentation (see website for times) where you'll get to admire the talents of Asian small-clawed otters and Fennec foxes among others. Arrive early as this is a particularly popular event.

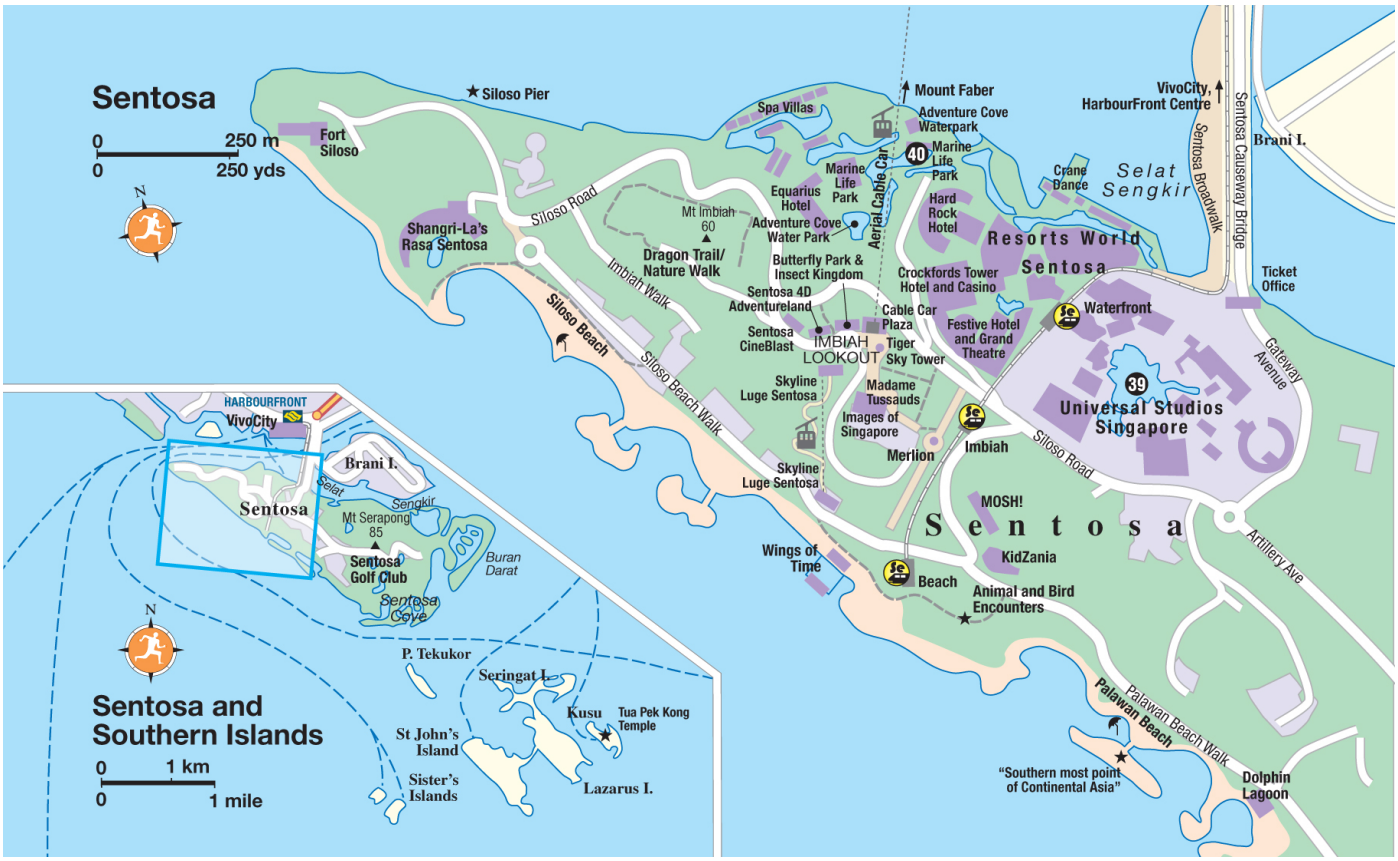
WARTIME MEMORIES

Singapore has a number of museums dedicated to the events of World War II. **Surviving the Japanese Occupation: War and Its Legacies** (351 Upper Bukit Timah Road; www.nas.gov.sg/formerfordfactory; charge) is an exhibition in the historic Ford factory where the British surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. Nearby is **Reflections at Bukit Chandu** (31-K Pepys Road; www.nhb.gov.sg/bukitchandu; charge for tourists), a memorial to the Malay soldiers who fought against the Japanese. On the eastern side of Singapore is the **Changi Chapel and Museum** (1000 Upper Changi Road North; tel: 6214 2451; www.nhb.gov.sg/changichapelmuseum; free), a small museum dedicated to prisoners of war.

Shutterstock
The cable car to Sentosa

ISLAND EXCURSIONS

Singapore is an island of islands. Some of its 63 nearby islets are now used for petroleum refining and storage, but a few make for excellent day trips and these are easily accessible by bumboat, ferry or even cable car.



SENTOSA

Sentosa (www.sentosa.com.sg), just south of the main island, is connected by the 710m (0.5-mile) Causeway Bridge. If you take a taxi directly to the drop-off point at the Resorts World casino, you can avoid the S$6 admission fee.

A more exciting way of getting there is to take a **cable car** ride that drifts 60m (197ft) above the harbour into the heart of the island. Cable cars run continuously (8.45am to 9.30pm) from **Mount Faber** to **HarbourFront Tower 2** and on to **Sentosa Station**. Cable cars departing from The Jewel Box on Mount Faber also offer 'sky dining' (www.mountfaber.com.sg; packages including admission fees and a guided tour of Sentosa are available).

The fastest mode of transport to the island is the light rail ***Sentosa Express***. Board from the Sentosa Express station located in VivoCity shopping mall (Level 3) on the main island (first train 7am, last train 10pm, Fri–Sun midnight). The *Sentosa Express* stops at three stations (Waterfront, Imbiah and Beach) on Sentosa, which are within walking distance of many attractions. Otherwise,

you can connect to shuttle buses and trams (free) to reach the attractions. Visitors can also get to Sentosa on foot via the Sentosa Boardwalk (daily 24 hours, ticket counter 9am–6pm, travelators 7am–midnight), parallel to Sentosa's vehicular bridge.

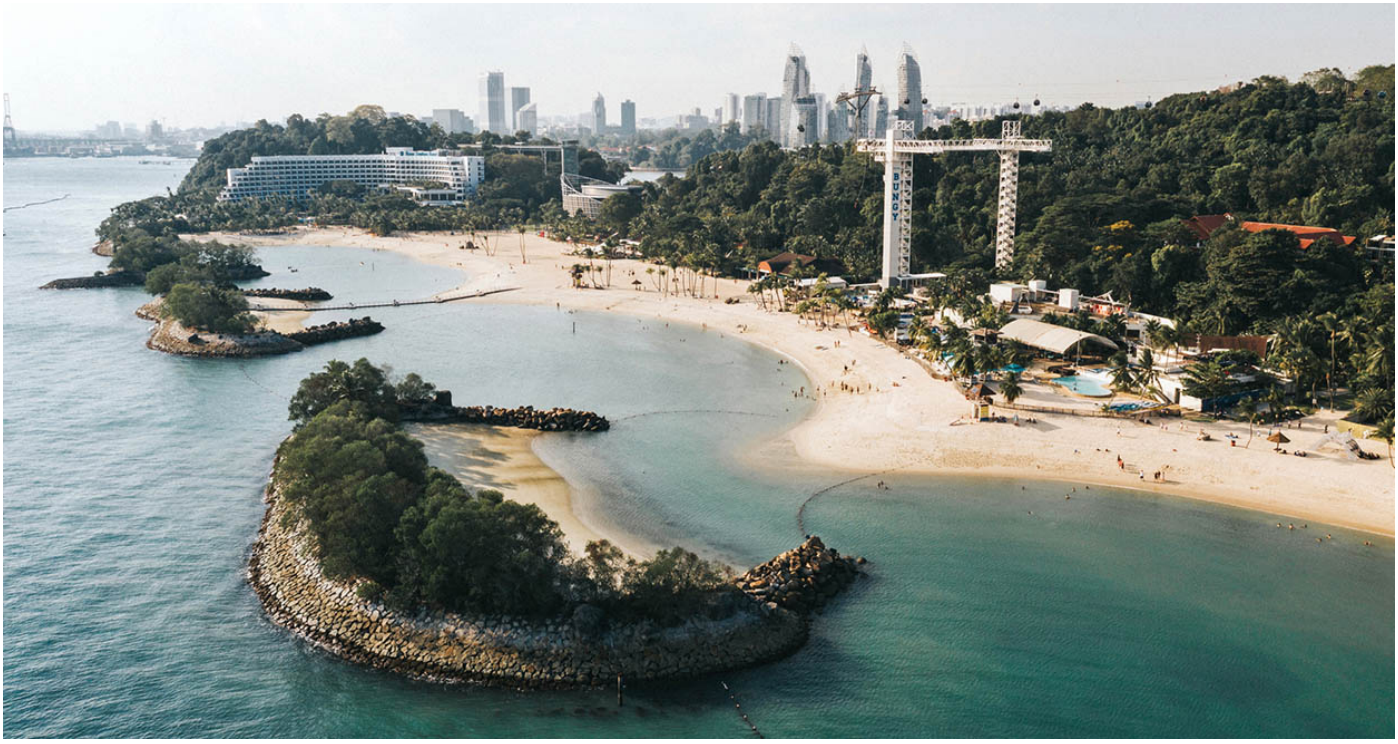
Sentosa served as the headquarters of the British military in the 18th century. Formerly known as Pulau Blakang Mati ('island at the back of which lies death'), the island was renamed Sentosa ('isle of peace and tranquillity') in 1972 and developed as a resort.

Sentosa's recreational opportunities are among Singapore's best. A major highlight is **Resorts World Sentosa** (www.rwsentosa.com), home to Southeast Asia's first and only **Universal Studios Singapore** ㊴ [map] theme park (8 Sentosa Gateway; charge). There are seven zones and 21 themed rides. Highlights include Shrek's 4-Adventure, Jurassic Park Rapids Adventure, and Madagascar's tropical jungle based on the DreamWorks film, as well as the sprawling casino and several restaurants.

The resort also houses the world's largest oceanarium, **Marine Life Park** ㊵ [map] (www.rwsentosa.com). Within the park is the S.E.A. Aquarium, which has more than 100,000 marine animals in 40 different habitats. At the Adventure Cove Waterpark, you can snorkel with 20,000 tropical fish or float down Adventure River, passing through 14 themed zones. Resorts World Sentosa also offers a range of Dolphin Island interaction programmes during which it's possible to swim and play with Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins. And at the Trick Eye Museum (https://trickeye.sg; charge), visitors are able to see a range of impressive optical illusions.

Aside from Resorts World Sentosa, most of the island's other attractions levy additional admission fees. Package tickets can be purchased online (http://store.sentosa.com.sg) or at the cable car ticketing counters at HarbourFront Tower 2 and on Mount Faber, as well as at the Beach and VivoCity Sentosa Express stations.

Many of the main attractions are grouped in a cluster named the **Imbiah Lookout**, near the Imbiah Station and the cable car station. For example, **Madame Tussauds Singapore** (www.madametussauds.com/singapore; charge), a branch of the worldwide wax museum. The museum features life-like figures of many political, sports and film icons. Another attraction at the Imbiah Lookout is **Sentosa Nature Discovery**, a museum showcasing the wildlife and plants on the island.



Singapore Tourist Board
Siloso Beach

Singapore Tourist Board
Sentosa 4D AdventureLand

Visitors with children may want to head to kid-friendly attractions such as the interactive **Sentosa 4D AdventureLand** movie theatre (https://4dadventureland.com.sg; charge), and the **Skyline Luge Sentosa** (www.skylineluge.com/en/sentosa; charge). Sentosa's best attraction in Imbiah Lookout is **Images of Singapore** (www.imagesofsingaporelive.com), part of Madame Tussauds. This tells of Singapore's history and displays its various cultures using life-sized dioramas, artefacts, films and replicas of old street scenes.

Sentosa's other historical display is **Fort Siloso** (Siloso Road; www.sentosa.com.sg/en/things-to-do/attractions/fort-siloso; free). The original fort was built by the British in the 1880s for Singapore's defence. The interactive displays tell the fort's history from its construction through to its fall in World War II. Also here are the **Surrender Chambers**, which bring to life

Singapore's formal surrender to the Japanese in 1942 with a mix of gripping audio-visual footage, artefacts and realistic wax figurines.

Sentosa is also popular for its beaches. The sands are soft and clean at **Palawan Beach** and **Siloso Beach**, which have good beach bars as well as sailboards, canoes and pedal boats for hire. At Siloso Beach the multi-sensory extravaganza **Wings of Time** dazzles audiences every evening. Adrenalin junkies can sign up for indoor skydiving at iFly Singapore (43 Siloso Beach Walk, next to Beach Station; www.iflysingapore.com; charge).

SOUTHERN ISLANDS

Nearby **Kusu Island** and **St John's Island** offer escapes for Singapore residents. St John's, the larger of the two, has little else besides picnicking and swimming, although its concrete promenades on the shoreline are fine for strolls. There is limited accommodation on the island.

SLOW
SLOW

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Skyline Luge Sentosa

Kusu, also called Turtle Island, has more to see. Legend has it that two shipwrecked sailors – one Chinese, one Malay – were saved when a giant turtle transformed itself into an island. Each man gave thanks according to his own belief, and so today the Taoist **Tua Pek Kong Temple** (www.lytpk.org.sg) with its turtle pool and the Muslim *keramat* (shrine) on the hill are popular places of pilgrimage. In the ninth month of the lunar calendar, usually straddling October and November, Taoists, Buddhists and Malays flock to the island. The Chinese come to pray for prosperity, good luck and fertility, while Malay pilgrims climb the 152 steps to the shrine to offer prayers. Check the website for the full ferry schedule to both islands (www.islandcruise.com.sg). To get to the pier, take bus number 400 from the Marina Bay MRT Station.

Shutterstock
Pulau Ubin

PULAU UBIN

If time allows a visit to only one of Singapore's little islands, the best choice is **Pulau Ubin** (Granite Island), where some of the last vestiges of old Singapore cling on. Part of the fun is getting there, on a bumboat from the Changi Point Ferry Terminal (accessible by taxi or take the MRT to the Tanah Merah station, then bus number 2). The bumboat takes about 10 minutes to make the crossing. The first boat leaves Singapore at 6.30am and the last leaves Pulau Ubin at 10pm. (There is no fixed schedule; the boat departs as soon as it has 12 passengers.)

The village at the wharf on Pulau Ubin consists of a cluster of *kelong* (Malay fishing huts) and several businesses renting bicycles, which are ideal for getting around. An information kiosk at the village entrance provides maps. The one-hour **Sensory Trail** guided tour is available (maximum 15 persons; bookings online at www.nparks.gov.sg). You can also follow this signposted trail on your own. You will be able to touch, see and smell fruit trees, spices and herbs used in cooking and medicine, and native plants of the mangrove forest. The trail does not cover a large area but it rewards exploration.

Otherwise, hire a bicycle for the day. Ride past mangrove swamps, coconut palm groves, granite quarries, and rustic duck and prawn farms. Brahminy kites and white-bellied fish eagles are fairly common and easy to spot along the foreshore. Long-tailed macaques and wild boars also live here but are harder to find. Some residents still farm and fish, others serve the tourist trade and a few run seafood restaurants near the jetty.

Unfortunately, there are no hotels or resorts on this small island; however, overnight camping is allowed on **Mamam Beach** and the **Jelutong** campsite (no visitor's permit is required).

CHEK JAWA

Another excellent spot to enjoy Pulau Ubin's nature offerings is Chek Jawa on the southeastern tip. The intertidal mudflats here are so fertile that they have engendered a rich ecosystem found nowhere else in Singapore. A boardwalk and a seven-storey viewing tower allow visitors to explore this unusual area. The two-hour guided tour must be booked in advance (maximum 15 persons; bookings online at www.nparks.gov.sg).

THINGS TO DO

Shopping and dining out are the lifeblood of Singapore. Visitors will find an endless array of places to do both, economically or in high style. There is also an increasing number of venues for entertainment and sports as well as an extensive calendar of annual festivals. And no other city offers a cleaner and safer environment to introduce children to the tapestry of cultures of East and Southeast Asia.

Singapore Tourist Board
Merlion souvenirs on Sentosa

SHOPPING

If Singapore has a national pastime, it is shopping. Downtown is stuffed with air-conditioned malls, department stores and boutiques, and the traditional

neighbourhoods offer additional street markets and shops vending everything from knickknacks to antiques.

Most shopping centres and shops are open from 10am to 9pm daily (sometimes later at weekends). Credit cards and e-wallets for digital payments are widely accepted too, notably GrabPay, FavePay and DBS PayLah. Bargaining is not practised at most of the larger stores but vendors with stalls in markets often do. Many retailers can provide overseas shipping if there's an item you like that won't fit in your luggage. Insist on written confirmation of your purchases and buy shipping insurance unless your credit card covers it.

Prices for many goods in Singapore are equal to or higher than those in Western countries. However, there are good discounts during the **Great Singapore Sale** (www.greatsingaporesale.com.sg), which usually runs from the last week of May through June and July.

TAX-FREE SHOPPING

Although a Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 7 percent is levied on most purchases, this can be refunded if you spend a minimum of S$100 at shops participating in the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS). There are two central refund agencies under this scheme: **Global Blue Singapore Pte Ltd** (www.globalblue.com) and **Premier Tax Free (Singapore) Pte Ltd** (www.premiertaxfree.com). Look out for shops with the 'Tax Refund' logo. Fill in a voucher for your purchases. Before your departure at Changi Airport, validate the voucher at the airport customs, then present it with your purchased items at the Global Blue counter or Premier Tax Free counter. You can opt for cash or cheque refund, or ask for the refund to be credited to your credit card or bank account. Alternatively, file your GST claims at the eTRS (electronic tourist refund scheme; www.iras.gov.sg) self-help kiosk at Changi Airport. Look out for shops with the eTRS sign and use one credit card as a token for tagging your purchases.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEES

Merchants at Changi Airport offer two guarantees. The first is on price. If you find you have paid more at the airport than at one of the downtown department stores and major shops on their list, they will give you a refund that is double the price difference if you can show written proof. The second guarantee is simpler. If you've bought the wrong gift or changed your mind, they will give you a full refund, no questions asked, if you return

the item and receipt within 30 days. You can do this even after leaving Singapore; shipping costs will be refunded as well. For details, contact the manager of the airport shop you bought the item from, or the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (www.caas.gov.sg).

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Bugis Street Market

WHERE TO SHOP

Civic District

The **Civic District** is dominated by shopping centres and department stores. Among the biggest is **Suntec City Mall** (3 Temasek Boulevard; www.sunteccity.com.sg), filled with mid-range food outlets as well as plenty of fashion and lifestyle stores. The central circular **Fountain of Wealth** is billed as the world's largest fountain; its waters flow downwards instead of shooting upwards, since the traditional Chinese belief is that water represents wealth and the tenants here want the water flowing directly into their shopping centre.

Other malls and shopping arcades in this area include **Millenia Walk** (9 Raffles Boulevard; www.milleniawalk.com) and **Marina Square** (6 Raffles Boulevard; www.marinasquare.com.sg). **The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands** (10 Bayfront Avenue; www.marinabaysands.com) is the place to treat yourself to a luxury shopping experience, with brands such as Chanel, Burberry, Fendi, Gucci, Hermès and Yves Saint Laurent.

The **Raffles Hotel Shopping Arcade** (328 North Bridge Road) has art galleries and luxury-brand boutiques. The **Raffles City Shopping Centre** (252 North Bridge Road; www.rafflescity.com.sg) nearby is linked to Suntec City Mall by a walkway and shopping mall, appropriately dubbed the **CityLink Mall** (1 Raffles Link; www.citylinkmall.com).

Other major malls include **Funan DigitaLife Mall** (109 North Bridge Road) and **Sim Lim Square** (1 Rochor Canal; www.simlimsquare.com.sg), packed with computer and electronics stores. **Bugis Junction** (200 Victoria Street; www.bugisjunction-mall.com.sg) is a glass-covered mall that retains its shophouse architecture; across the street from it is the **Bugis Street market**.

Bugis+ (201 Victoria Street; www.bugisplus.com.sg) is linked via a bridge to Bugis Junction at Level 2. Mid-range stores and fashion boutiques are targeted at a younger crowd. There is a cineplex on the fifth level.

Orchard Road

Orchard Road is another major downtown shopping strip, renowned for its upscale international stores. **ION Orchard** (2 Orchard Turn; www.ionorchard.com) is the most exciting of the recent additions here, with over 300 retail, F&B and entertainment stores. **313@Somerset** (313 Orchard Road; www.313somerset.com.sg) sits above the Somerset MRT station and caters to shoppers' passions for fashion and food. There's a huge food court on the fifth level. Next door is **Orchard Gateway** (www.orchardgateway.sg), which is made up of two buildings on diagonally opposite sites, linked via a glass bridge. Among its 100 or so tenants are American lifestyle store Crate & Barrel and the library@orchard public library. A stone's throw away is **Orchard Central** (181 Orchard Road; www.orchardcentral.com.sg), filled with independent retail stores and eateries including Dean & Deluca from New York. **Knightsbridge** (270 Orchard Road) houses the popular Abercrombie and Fitch store.

Among the favourites of the older shopping malls are **Wisma Atria** (435 Orchard Road; www.wismaonline.com), noted for its fashion boutiques and Food Republic food court; **Ngee Ann City** (391 Orchard Road;

www.ngeeanncity.com.sg), with the Japanese department store Takashimaya and Kinokuniya bookstore; **Paragon** (290 Orchard Road; www.paragon.com.sg), with numerous luxury boutiques, and **Centrepoint** (176 Orchard Road; http://thecentrepoint.fraserscentrepointmalls.com/), long a favourite of Singaporeans. **Far East Plaza** (14 Scotts Road) has trendy streetwear at low prices. Two popular home-grown emporiums are **Tangs** (320 Orchard Road) with well-loved fashion, beauty and household sections, and **Robinsons** (260 Orchard Road; www.robinsons.com.sg), Singapore's oldest department store with a 155-year history.

DFS Galleria (25 Scotts Road; www.dfsgalleria.com) is a treasure trove of designer fashion and cosmetics with duty-free savings. Slightly further away **Tanglin Shopping Centre** (19 Tanglin Road; www.tanglinsc.com) has the city's largest selection of Persian rugs, old maps and Asian antiques.

Singapore Tourist Board
Souvenir shop in Chinatown

Chinatown

Singapore's traditional neighbourhoods offer more unusual shopping possibilities. Chinatown is headlined by **Yue Hwa Emporium** (70 Eu Tong Sen Street; www.yuehwa.com.sg), a department store where all the clothing, household goods and crafts are from Taiwan and China. **People's Park Centre** (101 Upper Cross Street) is filled with Chinese vendors willing to bargain while **People's Park Complex** (1 Park Road) has fabrics and streetwear. There are also plethora of boutique shops at street level, many with a long celebrated history, including **Pek Sin Choon** on Mosque Street, a tea merchants founded in 1925, and **Kim Poh Hong**, a goldsmiths established in 1938 on what is now Pickering Street.

Jack Hollingsworth/Apa Publications
Little India fabric vendor

Little India

Little India is the area to poke around for bangles, gold jewellery, silk saris and Indian spices. **Little India Arcade** on 48 Serangoon Road has over 50 small shops and the nearby **Tekka Centre** (665 Buffalo Road) has a wet market and scores of shops selling saris, batiks and brassware. **Mustafa Centre** (145 Syed Alwi Road; www.mustafa.com.sg) is a large 24-hour department store popular for its low-priced electronic goods, groceries and garments.

Suburbs

VivoCity (1 HarbourFront Walk; www.vivocity.com.sg), a shopping and entertainment centre with the largest retail venue in Singapore features cineplexes, a hypermarket and a wide range of restaurants and cafés to suit every palate.

Suburban malls offer many of the same goods available downtown, but often at much better prices. **Century Square** (2 Tampines Central 5; www.centurysquare.com.sg) is beside the Tampines MRT Station; **Junction 8** (9 Bishan Place; www.junction8.com.sg) is served by the Bishan MRT Station, and **JEM** (50 Jurong Gateway Road; www.jem.sg) and **Westgate** (3 Gateway Drive, www.westgate.com.sg) are located next to Jurong East MRT Station.

SPECIALIST SHOPS

Antiques and handicrafts

There is a cluster of antique shops at **Tanglin Shopping Centre** (19 Tanglin Road); if you purchase something there, request shipping and certificates of authenticity. Stores include **Antiques of the Orient** (02-40; www.aoto.com.sg); **Naga Arts & Antiques** (01-48; tel: 8428 3905); and **KenSoon Asiatic Art** (02-57/58; www.kensoon.com).

Woody Antique House (www.woodyantique.com) previously based on Dempsey Road, is now housed within the Tan Boon Liat Building on Outram

Road and has been selling some of the finest antiques in Singapore for over 25 years. **Kwok Gallery** (03-01 Far East Shopping Centre, 545 Orchard Road; tel: 6235 2516) has dealt in genuine Chinese pieces since 1918.

COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENTS

Singapore has several means to rectify retailer malfeasance. You can lodge complaints with the Singapore Tourism Board by calling its hotline 1800-736 2000 (toll-free in Singapore) or going online at www.visitsingapore.com. Alternatively, contact the Small Claims Tribunal (1st level, Subordinate Courts, 1 Havelock Square; www.statecourts.gov.sg). At the latter, complaints are heard on short notice and judgements are rendered on the spot.

Bookstores

Singapore's leading bookstores are **Kinokuniya** (Multiple locations; www.kinokuniya.com.sg); and **Times Bookstores** (04-08 Centrepoint, 176 Orchard Road; 04-41 Paragon, 290 Orchard Road; www.timesbookstores.com.sg). The small, independent **Select Books** (65A Jalan Tenteram; www.selectbooks.com.sg) has a rich collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian books. Centrally located **ZALL Bookstore** (501 Orchard Rd, Wheelock Place; tel: 6232 7549) carries English-language and Chinese-language titles and has an in-house café and gallery to boot.

TAILORS

CYC The Custom Shop (02-11/12 Capitol Piazza, 13 Stamford Road; https://cyctailor.com), established in 1935, was the first company in Singapore to offer custom-made shirts. Fabrics from Italy, Switzerland, France and Japan are used for the fine-quality shirts. **Coloc Tailor** (03-07 Mandarin Hotel Gallery, 333A Orchard Road; www.coloc.com.sg) can complete a suit in 24 hours. **Pimab's** (20 Cavan Road; www.pimabs.com), helmed by local fashion designer Leslie Chia, specialises in bespoke services for men at reasonable prices. Far East Plaza at 14 Scotts Road also has tailors that offer made-to-measure clothes. **Solito Fashions** (02-95; tel: 6732 8468) and **Ascott Tailors** (02-88; www.ascott-tailors.com/home) can have your clothes ready within eight hours.

Quality control

Shops displaying the CaseTrust (CT) logo are accredited as reliable and honest by the Consumers Association of Singapore.

ENTERTAINMENT

In addition to its shopping, eating and cultural attractions, Singapore has a thriving nightlife scene, although it remains a tamer one than those found in some other Asian and Western capitals.

Jack Hollingsworth/Apa Publications
Chinese opera performers

PERFORMING ARTS

Singapore's impresarios bring in performances by international groups and artists. Current attractions are listed in tourist magazines such as *Where Singapore* and in the dailies. Tickets can be purchased at SISTIC (tel: 6348

5555) box offices; bookings can also be made at www.sistic.com.sg. The **Singapore International Festival of Arts** (www.sifa.sg), held in August and September, is well regarded for its line-up of innovative works. The **Singapore Night Festival**, a nocturnal festival held over two weekends in August, showcases spectacular aerial performances, music and dance shows, and installation artworks at various museums in the Bras Basah district. Each year there is a new and innovative theme for the event.

The **Fort Canning Centre** hosts outdoor performances such as rock concerts and ballets. Singapore has some Chinese opera companies, which often perform on outdoor stages in Chinatown and at annual festivals, particularly during the Festival of the Hungry Ghosts around August.

The **Chinese Opera Teahouse** (5 Smith Street; www.ctcopera.com) offers performances of opera excerpts with English subtitles (showtimes Fri and Sat 7–9pm; admission fee inclusive of set dinner or 8–9pm with a snack, Chinese tea and dessert).

The iconic **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay** (1 Esplanade Drive; www.esplanade.com) is Singapore's world-class performing arts centre. Music, theatre, dance and outdoor performances are hosted in this large complex. The noted **Singapore Symphony Orchestra** performs here regularly; check www.sso.org.sg for programme updates. The Esplanade also hosts the **Mosaic Music Series**, featuring exceptional world musicians.

The Marina Bay Sands integrated resort includes **The Sands Theatre** and **The Grand Theatre** (10 Bayfront Avenue; www.marinabaysands.com), with stunning interior design and sophisticated technology. Major musicals such as *Matilda* and *Hamilton* are shown here.

NIGHTLIFE

With hundreds of clubs, bars, and karaoke lounges, late-night entertainment options in Singapore are plenty. Some places might have dress codes so check with the venue beforehand if you're unsure.

SINGAPORE RIVER

For those seeking a leisurely drink, Singapore has a large number of chic bars and lounges, many with outdoor seating. The **Boat Quay** shophouses are home to a few such establishments. **Harry's Bar** (28 Boat Quay; www.harrys.com.sg) offers live jazz. **Molly Malone's Irish Pub** (56 Circular Road; www.molly-malone.com) and the Victorian pub, **The Penny Black** (26–

27 Boat Quay; www.pennyblack.com.sg) are excellent places to down pints of Guinness. **George Town Tze Char and Craft Beer** (8 Boat Quay; tel: 9682 3826) at the end of the strip offers exotic snacks like Penang Thai-style squid paired with beers brewed in Singapore and the wider-region.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Boat Quay is home to chic bars and lounges

Clarke Quay (www.clarkequay.com.sg) has hip restaurants, bars and dance clubs like **Attica** (01-03, 3A River Valley Road; www.attica.com.sg). The top club **Zouk** in the Cannery (3C River Valley Road; www.zoukclub.com) is unmissable. Ever the trendsetter, it features a wine bar, three clubs and international DJs. **The Riverhouse** (3A River Valley Rd; www.theriverhouse.sg) is Clarke Quay's oldest establishment, dating back to 1870, although back then, it probably didn't house the **YIN bar & lounge** or the **YANG** international nightclub.

CIVIC DISTRICT

Paulaner Bräuhaus (01-01 Millenia Walk, 9 Raffles Boulevard; www.paulaner-brauhaus.com/singapore), is a popular German microbrewery serving delicious Bavarian bites and entertainment, especially popular during Oktoberfest. The menu is extensive and there's also a great range of vegetarian options.

Accor Hotels
SKAI Bar at Swissôtel The Stamford

At the **Long Bar** (Raffles Hotel, 1 Beach Road), Singapore Slings are must-haves, and the vertigo-inducing **SKAI Bar** at Swissôtel The Stamford (70th & 72nd Floors, 2 Stamford Road; www.swissotel.com/hotels/singapore-stamford) offers fabulous city views. **Anti:dote** at the lobby level of Fairmont Singapore (80 Bras Basah Road; www.fairmont-singapore.com) is a cocktail bar that has received rave reviews for its experimental concoctions, modern tapas and afternoon tea.

Quaich Bar Wanderlust (80 Middle Road; singapore.intercontinental.com) on the ground floor of the InterContinental is a must for whisky lovers. A

popular spot on top of the Marina Bay Sands Hotel is **Cé La Vi Singapore** (Marina Bay Sands North Tower, 1 Bayfront Avenue; www.celavi.com). **Republic** (level 3, 7 Raffles Avenue; www.republicbar.com.sg) is a kitschy, 1960s-themed cocktail bar and **Mr Punch Public House** (26 Seah Street; tel: 8339 8966) is a funky little bar on top of the Mint Museum of Toys.

ORCHARD ROAD

On **Emerald Hill** beside the Centrepoint Shopping Centre are several hot spots. The Spanish-inspired wine bar **Que Pasa** (7 Emerald Hill Road; www.quepasa.com.sg) presents sangria and tapas while time-honoured **Ice Cold Beer** (9 Emerald Hill Road; www.ice-cold-beer.com) serves beer straight from their ice tanks. At the western end of Orchard Road you'll find **Brix** (Basement One, Grand Wing, Grand Hyatt, 10 Scotts Road; temporarily closed for refurbishment), with beautiful people and special theme nights, and close by is the ever popular **Hard Rock Café** (02-01 HPL House, 50 Cuscaden Road; www.hardrock.com) with live music. There's also **Alleybar** (2 Emerald Hill, Peranakan Place; www.alleybar.sg), a stylish bar just off Orchard Road. Next door Gastropub Acid bar (180 Orchard Road; www.acidbar.sg) is a popular live music venue with day-long "happy hours".

SENTOSA

Sentosa Island has a few laid-back beach bars, great for sunset drinks. The stylish **Tanjong Beach Club** (120 Tanjong Beach Walk; www.tanjongbeachclub.com) is an all-day beach hideout offering excellent food and drinks. Sip cocktails on a deck chair at **Coastes** (50 Siloso Beach Walk; www.coastes.com) or after a day at the **Sentosa Golf Club**, enjoy the views and a signature cocktail on the terrace of **Panamericana** (27 Bukit Manis Rd; www.panamericana.sg).

Across Sentosa and next to VivoCity is **St James Power Station** (3 Sentosa Gateway; https://stjamespowerstation.sg), which underwent renovations in 2018. Formerly the site of entertainment venues, the power station is now the HQ and research centre for the well-known manufacturer Dyson, and its also home to the Heritage Trail and Gallery which highlights the role of the power station over almost a century.

SPORTS

Singapore has good facilities for sports activities. Active visitors should take heed of the high humidity and schedule outdoor workouts for early mornings or evenings.

Biking. Rentals are available at Sentosa, East Coast Park, Pasir Ris Park and Pulau Ubin.

Sea sports. Kayaking is available at Sentosa, East Coast Park and Changi Point while **cable skiing** is found at East Coast Lagoon (1206A, East Coast Parkway; www.singaporewakepark.com). **Waterskiing** and **wakeboarding** are available at the Kallang River. **Windsurfing**, **sailing** and **kitesurfing** equipment can be rented from **Constant Wind** (11 Changi Coast Walk; www.constantwind.com), a seasports and sailing school.

Vincent Ng/Apa Publications
Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

Golf. Several of Singapore's golf courses are world class, attracting such international tournaments as the Johnnie Walker Classic. There are numerous private golf courses offering limited access to non-members and public courses that have no restrictions on visitors. Green fees range from S$40 for a nine-hole course on weekdays to S$400 for a full round at a championship course

on weekends. Some clubs may ask you for a proficiency certificate. Clubs include **Changi Golf Club** (20 Netheravon Road; www.changigolfclub.org.sg) with a nine-hole course and sea views; **Orchid Country Club** (1 Orchid Club Road; www.orchidclub.com), which offers night golfing; the **Singapore Island Country Club** (180 Island Club Road; www.sicc.org.sg) with four 18-hole courses amidst the verdant MacRitchie Reservoir; **Sentosa Golf Club** (27 Bukit Manis Road, Sentosa Island; www.sentosagolf.com) with two beautiful championship 18-hole courses, and **Tanah Merah Country Club** (25 Changi Coast Road; www.tmcc.org.sg), also with two 18-hole courses.

Hiking. Despite the heat and humidity, hiking is one of Singapore's most attractive outdoor pursuits. The **Bukit Timah Nature Reserve** (177 Hindhede Drive; www.nparks.gov.sg), **Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve** (301 Neo Tiew Crescent; www.nparks.gov.sg) and **MacRitchie Nature Trail** (off Thomson Road at the Central Catchment Nature Reserve; www.nparks.gov.sg) are the three most popular trekking areas.

Spectator sports. Among the most popular are **cricket** and **rugby**, matches of which you might see at the Padang across from City Hall. The annual SCC International Rugby Sevens tournament is also held here. Singapore has its own **soccer** league (spl.sg), in which local and international teams compete at stadiums around the island. The **F1 Singapore Grand Prix** in September (www.singaporegp.sg) is a popular event and the city even hosted the first night race in F1 history back in 2008.

Volleyball. Not as popular as mainstream sports but there is growing interest in the game.

SINGAPORE FOR CHILDREN

Singapore has many attractions designed for visitors of all ages, most offering child discounts.

With its beaches, oceanarium and theme parks, **Sentosa** (for more information, click here) is practically made for children. One of the most exciting attractions is **Universal Studios Singapore** (8 Sentosa Gateway; www.rwsentosa.com) but other attractions include:

KidZania (31 Beach View; https://kidzania.com/en), a child-sized replica of a city where children perform adult jobs, was forced to closed as a result of Covid-19 but is expected to reopen in 2024 with a focus on reflecting jobs and cities of the future.

Housed in a 100-year-old colonial building, the **Singapore Children's Museum** (23B Coleman St; www.nhb.gov.sg/childrensmuseum) is an interactive and educational museum.

Singapore Zoo (for more information, click here) has a special area for younger children, and the **Night Safari** (for more information, click here) provides something exciting for families after nightfall. **River Wonders** (for more information, click here), home to the giant pandas from China, is a must-visit. **Bird Paradise** (for more information, click here), whose inhabitants range from hornbills to pelicans, has highly entertaining shows.

The **Haw Par Villa** (for more information, click here) gives kids a chance to experience Chinese culture while the **Singapore Discovery Centre** (510 Upper Jurong Road; www.defencecollectivesg.com) is a high-tech "edutainment" attraction celebrating the history of Singapore.

The **Science Centre Singapore** (15 Science Centre Road; www.science.edu.sg) has over 1000 exhibits, an Omni-theatre and an indoor snow centre, **Snow City** (www.snowcity.com.sg).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Check exact dates of these major festivals and events with the Singapore Tourism Board (www.visitsingapore.com).

January/February *Chinese New Year:* lion dances, night bazaar and festival in Chinatown; *Chingay:* Orchard Road street parade with floats and stilt-walkers; *Thaipusam*: Hindu devotees carry metal structures *(kavadi)* on a 3km (2-mile) pilgrimage of penance from Little India's Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple to Sri Thendayuthapani (Chettiar) Temple.

March/April *Singapore HeritageFest:* A celebration of shared culture and heritage in Singapore through exhibitions, events and performances.

May/June/July *Vesak Day:* birds released at temples to mark Buddha's entrance into Nirvana; *Singapore Dragon Boat Festival:* Chinese eat glutinous rice dumplings and join in dragon boat races to honour Qu Yuan, a patriotic martyr; *Great Singapore Sale:* huge discounts for eight weeks; *Singapore Food Festival:* an annual gourmet splash in July.

August/September *Hungry Ghosts Festival*: spirits of the dead return in the 7th lunar month, with street banquets and Chinese operas; *National Day*: celebrates independence with a massive parade and fireworks; *F1 Singapore Grand Prix:* premier racing event; *Mooncake (Lantern) Festival*: traditional mid-autumn festivities in Chinatown and Chinese Garden (temporarily closed for redevelopment). *Singapore International Festival of Arts:* the best performing arts from the East and West.

October/November/December *Navarathiri Festival:* nine nights devoted to three Hindu goddesses, with music and procession at Sri Mariamman Temple; *Deepavali:* the Festival of Lights is celebrated in homes, Hindu temples and in the streets of Little India; *Thimithi Festival:* devotees walk over burning coals at the Sri Mariamman Temple; *Deepavali Light-Ups:* in

Little India, Orchard Road (Christmas) and Geylang Serai (Hari Raya); *ZoukOut Dance Party:* international DJs spin from dusk to dawn.

Variable *Hari Raya Puasa:* Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan (fasting month) with prayers, feasts and home visits; *Hari Raya Haji:* marks the sacrifices made by Muslims who undertake the *haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).

FOOD AND DRINK

Singapore is one of the world's premier dining destinations with over 20,000 restaurants, cafés and food courts. This small country is situated (geographically, historically and culturally) on a culinary axis point where several of the world's top cuisines mingle, from the great regional traditions of Chinese and Indian cooking to the more localised Malay and the Peranakan (Straits Chinese) cuisines. Thai, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean food is also amply represented, as is first-rate fare from the West. Eating out is also convenient, with good service and hygiene and English widely spoken. Meals in hawker centres combine a diverse range of flavours to suit all palates and are particularly affordable.

Be sure to sample each of Singapore's celebrated cuisines. Try out the various settings too, from hawker centres and independent cafés to top hotel restaurants. Ask locals for tips, check out the latest local listings in the dailies and online food portals such as www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/food. Or download the 8 DAYS Eat app for a huge range of recommendations.

For dinner, especially on weekends, reservations are a must at establishments that accept them. Otherwise, join the lines at the various eateries. It is nearly always worth the wait.

HAWKER CENTRES AND FOOD COURTS

Hawker centres are Singapore's answer to fast-food restaurants. Meals are very cheap, with main courses costing just a few dollars. Pictures of each dish often decorate a food hawker's counter, accompanied by names in English. Most offer a variety of freshly cooked Chinese, Malay and Indian choices, as well as some other cuisine from the region. Your food is sometimes brought to your table; other times you pick up your order on a tray. Singapore's most popular hawker centres are **Food Centre** near Chinatown, **Newton Food Centre** across the Newton MRT Station, **Adam Road Food Centre** opposite the **Botanical Gardens** (Bukit Timah Gate) and **Lau Pa Sat** near the Raffles Place MRT Station.

Danny Santos/STB
Meat skewers grilling at Satay by the Bay

Food courts are slightly fancier than hawker centres, often located in shopping malls. These are air-conditioned, and prices are generally higher, but the same procedures apply.

CHINESE CUISINE

The majority of Singaporeans are of Chinese descent, so regional Chinese cuisines are amply represented. From Cantonese dim sum to Teochew rice porridge , the choices offered by Chinese restaurants are endless. Increasingly too, spicey Hunan fare, Sichuan hot pot and North-eastern dumpling houses are colonising foot streets, catering to a rapid rise in tourists from the PRC.

Street-food-style offerings from Chinese hawkers are must tries. Popular dishes include *char kway teow* (fried rice noodles with clams, Chinese sausage and egg tossed with soy sauce), *popiah* (spring rolls with various fillings), *wonton mee* (egg noodles topped with minced meat or shrimp dumplings and sliced roast pork) and *yong tau foo* (beancurd stuffed with meat). Undoubtedly the single most popular dish is Hainanese chicken rice (poached chicken served

with fragrant rice cooked in chicken stock and accompanied by a piquant chilli-ginger sauce). This is a staple at hawker centres, food courts and most Chinese coffee shops.

Smoking corners

Smoking has been banned in air-conditioned eateries for over 20 years, and smokers are also prohibited from lighting up outdoors at coffee shops, hawker centres and cafés. Special smoking corners are available only at establishments with permits.

MALAY CUISINE

Malay dishes tend to be spicy, livened up with ingredients such as lemongrass, chillies, cloves, tamarind and shrimp paste *(belacan)*. Coconut milk is also often added to temper the spiciness. For religious reasons, pork is never used.

A popular dish is *satay*, skewers of meat that are spiced and marinated before barbecuing. Satay, usually beef, mutton and chicken, is often accompanied by *ketupat* (steamed rice wrapped in coconut leaves), cucumber, onions and a spicy peanut sauce.

Among other savoury Malay offerings are *mee rebus* (yellow noodles in a thick spicy gravy), *gado gado* (vegetable salad smothered in a coconut and peanut sauce, served with prawn crackers), *nasi goreng* (Malay-style fried rice), *soto ayam* (spicy chicken soup with rice cakes), *rendang* (beef slowly cooked in coconut milk and spices) and curries.

PERANAKAN (NYONYA) CUISINE

Nyonya (which refers to the women of a Peranakan or Straits-Chinese family of mixed Chinese and Malay heritage) cuisine is Singapore's most indigenous. Chinese and Malay ingredients and recipes have been transformed into some of Singapore's most delicious dishes. There are a few Peranakan restaurants in Katong in the eastern part of Singapore.

Coconut milk, shrimp paste *(belacan)* and chillies give Nyonya dishes a unique flavour. Shrimp paste, chilli and lime are pounded together to form a condiment called *sambal belacan*. Dishes worth trying are *buah keluak* (chicken and black nuts in tamarind sauce), *laksa* (rice noodles in curry sauce), *nyonya kueh* (glutinous rice cakes usually made with coconut milk and palm

sugar) and *otak-otak* (minced fish flavoured with lime and coconut, wrapped in banana leaves and charcoal roasted).

INDIAN CUISINE

The Indian food in Singapore is on a par with the best dishes in India. Diners are treated to the best of northern and southern Indian dishes, as well as creations that are uniquely Singaporean.

Dreamstime
Crispy fried prawns

Northern Indian cuisine is mild and subtle, often employing yoghurt, wheat breads and ghee (clarified butter) rather than cooking oils. Tandoori (marinated meat or fish cooked in clay ovens) is the signature dish. In Singapore, the local variations on traditional northern Indian recipes have produced dishes like *mee goreng* (bean curd, mutton and peas fried with thick noodles in a tomato sauce) and *sup kambing* (a mutton soup accompanied by French bread).

Southern Indian cuisine is spicier and often less pricey. This is most often served in ‘banana-leaf’ restaurants, where a banana leaf replaces the plate.

Rice is ladled onto the big leaf, followed by mounds of chutneys, dal (pureed lentils) and curries. The meal is eaten by hand, with the rice pinched between one's fingers. Vegetarians will enjoy southern Indian food as many dishes are meatless. Little India has a number of inexpensive vegetarian restaurants. Muslim Indian restaurants avoid pork but use other meats, especially in dishes such as *biryani*, which has a basmati-rice base.

Indian cooking is known for its breads, ranging from the unleavened *chapati* to the fluffy *puri*. In Singapore, a popular bread is *roti prata*, a large, thin, folded pancake cooked on a griddle. When filled with spicy mutton (or chicken) and egg, it becomes *murtabak*, a staple at Indian street stalls and hawker centres.

Strangely enough, the best-known Indian dish in Singapore is not Indian at all, but rather a regional invention, the fish-head curry. The fish head is usually that of a red snapper, boiled in a spicy curry and served eyeball-up. Each community in Singapore has its own version of the dish.

TEA WITH THE QUEEN

The perfect shopping and sightseeing break in bustling Singapore is a visit to a traditional Chinese teahouse. Singapore's best known is **Tea Chapter** (9/11 Neil Road; http://teachapter.com), located near Jinriksha Station. On 10 October 1989, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip took their tea here in a private room upstairs overlooking the street. Visitors today can appreciate the pleasures of Chinese tea culture in the same room. The teas run the gamut, from greens to reds, but the service is traditional. Water is heated at the table, the tea arrives in tiny packets, and scoops, tea clips, fragrance cups, saucers and snacks complete the graceful setting.

Singapore Tourist Board
The famous chilli crab

SEAFOOD

The seafood restaurants along East Coast Parkway, facing the sea, do brisk business nearly every night. What's served is simply the fresh catch of the day, often perfectly prepared in any style you wish, with sauces of your choice. You can have squid deep fried, prawns in garlic and stingrays barbecued. Singapore's most popular signature seafood is chilli crab; pepper crab comes a close second. These are whole crabs stir fried with a fiery chilli or black-pepper sauce.

EURASIAN FOOD

Eurasian cuisine comprises flavours from Singapore's minority community of Portuguese, Dutch, Malay, Javanese and Indian ancestry. A typical dish is devil curry (chicken perked up with vinegar, mustard and chillies).

Other specialities with a Western touch include stews and roasts, usually enhanced with the addition of soy sauce, green chillies or sour tamarind juice. The Eurasian family's Christmas table is always laden with these dishes, including a traditional item called *feng* – a type of curry made of pork and offal.

Desserts include *keuh kochi* - sweet, chewy dumplings filled with grated coconut. These are traditionally wrapped and served in banana leaves.

EUROPEAN CUISINES

French, Italian, Spanish and Mediterranean restaurants are scattered across Singapore. Top Western restaurants with foreign chefs are a staple in Singapore's international hotels, and finding a French restaurant with a French chef at the helm is easy.

In Singapore's high-end restaurants, you can find innovative, modern European cuisine using the freshest seasonal ingredients. Although there is no Michelin Guide in Singapore, this city has attracted many Michelin-starred chefs

to set up shop here. Boosting Singapore's reputation as a gastronomic city are restaurants by celebrity chefs from Tokyo, Paris, Sydney and New York, the majority of them located at Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa.

VEGAN & VEGETARIAN CUISINES

Chinese Buddhists and Indian Jains have a long tradition of abstaining from meat. **Chinatown** duly has some fine meat-free eateries to explore, many offering faux-meat versions of classic dishes like laksa and chicken noodles. Check out the **Lian Xin Vegetarian Food Court** near the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple. Meanwhile, **Little India** has a cluster of great plant-based diners in the area where Upper Dickson Street meets Serangoon Rd. **VeganBliss** (229 Joo Chiat Rd) is worth seeking out as it vends meat-free versions of hawker fare like char kway teow and Peking crispy duck.

COOKERY SCHOOLS

Several culinary schools offer introductory courses to Asian cuisine, lasting from a day to several weeks. **The Coriander Leaf** restaurant (30 Victoria Street, 02-01 Chijmes; www.corianderleaf.com) teaches the preparation of Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern and fusion cuisines. **Creative Culinaire** (17 Eng Hoon Street, 01-03/04 Eng Mansions; www.creativeculinaire.com.sg) presents various cooking styles to students, with a particular focus on Asian cuisine. **Expat Kitchen** (9 Norris Road, 02-01 Little India; www.expat-kitchen.com) was founded by Australian expat Annette Lang and focuses on Western cuisine.

Afur Wong/STB
Singapore's succulent, but infamous, durian fruit

EXOTIC FRUITS

Singapore's fresh-produce markets are the places to find vegetables and fruits not normally seen in Western supermarkets. The most notorious is the durian, known as the king of fruits and well loved by most Singaporeans. This spiny delight fetches royal prices, but to most foreigners, its smell is well beyond polite description. Public buildings and MRT stations display signs prohibiting the durian's very presence.

DRINKS

Ginger tea (*teh halia*), a staple of Indian drink vendors, is a strong contender to the lattes of Starbucks and other coffee chains. An even more direct contender is *kopi tarik*, the 'pulled coffee' that is 'pulled' by the maker from cup to pitcher and back again to ensure the ingredients are well mixed. Little India abounds with 'pulled-coffee' stalls.

WHERE TO EAT

We have used the following symbols to give an idea of the price for a three-course meal for one, including wine, cover and service:

$$$$ over $60
$$$ $40–60
$$ $20–40
$ under $20

SINGAPORE RIVER

Brewerkz $$$ *01-05/06 Riverside Point, 30 Merchant Road;* www.brewerkz.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Handcrafted beer fresh from its on-site microbrewery and hearty American cuisine in an industrial-like setting. It offers six signature beers, including the bestselling Golden Ale, as well as seven seasonal beers.

Jade $$$ *The Fullerton Hotel, 1 Fullerton Square;* www.fullertonhotel.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Jade serves up a sophisticated menu of Cantonese classics amid grand surroundings. The weekend a la carte dim sum buffet lunch serves exquisite creations such as deep-fried taro paste with truffle and mushroom.

The Lighthouse $$$$ *Level 8, The Fullerton Hotel, 1 Fullerton Square;* www.fullertonhotel.com. Open Monday to Friday for lunch, daily for dinner. This small restaurant presents a fabulous fine-dining Italian experience with stunning views. A great venue for romantic nights or special occasions. Well executed dishes include beef carpaccio and homemade *tagliolini* with Amalfi's lemon sauce and spiced prawns.

Makansutra Glutton's Bay $ *01-15 Esplanade Mall;* www.makansutra.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Dine on some of Singapore's best-loved street

food under the moonlight. A popular spot with both locals and tourists, Glutton's Bay has 12 push-cart hawkers selling favourites like barbecued chicken wings and oyster omelette.

Red House Seafood $$ *01-14 The Quayside, 60 Robertson Quay;* www.redhouseseafood.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Dishes like signature lobster and prawns with creamy custard sauce are always fresh and superbly prepared. There are two more Red House Seafood restaurants on 8 Raffles Avenue and 3C River Valley Road.

Rosso Vino $$$ *15 Merbau Rd;* www.rossovinosingapore.com. Open daily from 4pm, this Italian-run restaurant in Robinson Quay delivers fantastic pizza, pasta and wines at prices that are not unreasonable given the quality. Outside seating catches the cool breeze from the river at dusk, and there's a refreshing, Italian cocktail list to boot.

Saint Pierre $$$$ *02-02B One Fullerton, 1 Fullerton Road;* www.saintpierre.com.sg. Open for dinner Monday to Saturday, lunch Tuesday to Friday. This well-established modern French restaurant owned by celebrity chef Emmanuel Stroobant impresses with his sophisticated seasonal menu. Signatures include Stroobant's foie gras creations, oven-baked black cod with white miso and flourless chocolate cake.

Waku Ghin $$$$ *1 Marina Bay Sands, 10 Bayfront Avenue, Level 2 Casino;* www.marinabaysands.com. Open daily for dinner (two sittings). Tetsuya Wakuda's first restaurant outside Sydney is one of the high-profile celebrity-chef establishments at Marina Bay Sands. Enjoy the chef's highly acclaimed European cuisine with Japanese influence, prepared with the freshest seasonal ingredients. The wines and bay views are just as sublime.

CIVIC DISTRICT

Lei Garden $$$ *01-24 Chijmes, 30 Victoria Street;* www.chijmes.com.sg. Open daily for lunch and dinner. One of Singapore's best Cantonese restaurants, Lei Garden is renowned for its dim sum lunches and fresh seafood dishes (shark, abalone, lobster) served in an exquisite formal setting.

Mikuni $$$$ *Level 3, Fairmont Singapore, 80 Bras Basah Road;* www.fairmont.com/singapore/dining/mikuni. Open Monday to Saturday for lunch and dinner. Choose to sit at the *teppanyaki*, sushi or *robatayaki* counters where you can watch the chefs in action. Otherwise, opt for the main dining area where you can feast on the highly creative *kaiseki* menu featuring the best seasonal produce. The lunch bento sets are just as exquisite.

True Blue $$$ *47/49 Armenian Street;* www.truebluecuisine.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Just two doors away from the Peranakan Museum, this eatery is adorned with the owner Benjamin Seck's personal collection of Peranakan antiques and artefacts. Try favourites like spicy beef *rendang* and *ayam buah keluak* (chicken stewed with Indonesian black nuts).

CHINATOWN AND CBD

Bar-Roque Grill $$$$ *01-00, 165 Tanjong Pagar Road;* www.bar-roque.com.sg. Open Monday to Friday for lunch and dinner and Saturday for dinner. Alsace-born chef Stephane Istel, formerly of DB Bistro Moderne, serves large platters of food designed for sharing. The massive rotisserie churns out all kinds of delicious meats such as juicy free-range chicken and pork-knuckle.

Majestic Restaurant $$$$ *04-01, 5 Straits View, Marina One East Tower;* www.restaurantmajestic.com. Open Tuesday to Sunday for lunch and dinner. This stylish restaurant is known for its individually-plated, modern Cantonese cuisine such as grilled rack of lamb in Chinese honey sauce and braised lobster in a creamy milk and lime sauce. Diners get a view of swimmers in the pool above through port holes in the ceiling.

Maxwell Food Centre $ *Maxwell Road, next to the URA Centre.* Open daily from breakfast until supper. Join any of the long queues at one of Singapore's oldest food centres. Try the fish noodles, chicken rice or porridge and other local delights. Avoid weekday lunch hours when executives arrive in droves from the nearby CBD offices.

Spring Court $$$ *52-56 Upper Cross Street;* www.springcourt.com.sg. Open daily for lunch and dinner. This successful family-run restaurant, established in 1929, is considered one of the oldest Cantonese restaurants in Singapore. Make your way to this four-storey heritage building in Chinatown and enjoy

classics such as crisp roast chicken and golden cereal prawns. Dim sum is available for lunch.

Yi Xin Vegan Food $ *43 Temple Street; tel: 9366 6002.* Lovely little Buddhist place in the heart of Chinatown. There's a lunch and dinner buffet, if you're in a hurry, or order from the menu. Popular dishes include classics such as assam laksa, cuttle fish noodles or even curried chicken noodles, minus the meat of course.

LITTLE INDIA AND KAMPING GLAM

Banana Leaf Apolo $$ *54 Race Course Road, Little India;* www.thebananaleafapolo.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Within walking distance of Little India MRT station, this is one of the city's most popular South Indian restaurants, famed for its fiery fish-head curry. Meals are served on banana leaves. There are several outlets;Little India Arcade, Sixth Avenue, Downtown East and Rivervale Mall.

Gokul Raas Vegetarian Restaurant $$ *19 Upper Dickenson Rd;* https://gokulraasvegetarian.com.sg. Open daily. Housed in two lovely old shophouses, and fronted by an outdoor terrace, this restaurant serves a range of vegetarian Indian and regional cuisines, including vegan chicken rice, vegan *nasi lamak* and vegan *dum biriyani*. The crispy dosa is outstanding.

Hajjah Maimunah $ *11–15 Jalan Pisang, Kampong Glam;* www.hjmaimunah.com. Open Monday to Saturday for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This no-frills eatery, which serves some of the best Malay food in town, is always packed. Just point to the dishes behind the glass counter and indicate how many want. The tender beef *rendang* curry just melts in your mouth, and the *sotong bakar* (grilled squid) is exceptional. No credit cards.

Komala Vilas $ *76–78 Serangoon Road, Little India;* www.komalavilas.com.sg. Open daily. Singapore's classic southern Indian vegetarian restaurant (six decades old) provides an unforgettable dining experience. Recommended are its spicy rice and lentil curries served on banana leaf, chutneys and *thosais* (vegetable-stuffed crêpes). Eat with your hands – there are washbasins on the wall. No credit cards.

Singapore Zam Zam Restaurant $ *697–699 North Bridge Rd;* zamzam.sg. Open daily. A rough-and-ready place serving Indian-Muslim specialities. The fragrant mutton or chicken *biryani* (with saffron rice) is robustly spicy, as are the flaky breads, called *murtabak* when stuffed with minced mutton or chicken, and *prata* when eaten plain and dipped in curry.

ORCHARD ROAD

Basilico $$$$ *Level 2, Regent Hotel, 1 Cuscaden Road;* www.regenthotels.com. Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This restaurant by the pool offers alfresco and indoor dining. Aside from the a la carte menu, the outstanding antipasti buffet offers fresh seafood, salads, prosciutto ham with melon, squid-ink bread and other Italian-inspired creations. The dessert selection including Italian cakes, tarts and *gelatos* is heavenly.

Chatterbox $$ *Level 5, Mandarin Orchard Singapore, 333 Orchard Road;* www.meritushotels.com. Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The iconic coffee house is most famous for its chicken rice which, although expensive, is worth trying. The other local specialities offered such as *nasi lemak* (coconut rice with condiments) and lobster *laksa* are just as good.

Crossroads Café $$$ *Marriott Hotel, 320 Orchard Road;* www.singaporemarriott.com. Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Perch yourself at this sidewalk café and watch all of Orchard Road pass by while you sample its varied and delicious mix of Singapore favourites and Asian and Western dishes.

Din Tai Fung $$ *290 Orchard Road, B1-03 Paragon;* https://dintaifung.com.sg. Open daily. This wildly popular restaurant is always crowded during meal times and queuing may be necessary, but it's worth the wait. The open kitchen allows diners to watch the chefs in action. Feast on the famous *xiao long bao* (steamed pork dumplings that have exactly 18 pleats each) and other equally delicious dishes such as the fried rice and chicken soup.

Hua Ting $$$ *2/F, Orchard Hotel, 442 Orchard Road;* www.millenniumhotels.com.sg. Open daily for lunch and dinner. This stalwart serves traditional and innovative Cantonese delicacies created by well-known

master chef Lap Fai. Popular items include baked silver codfish with honey and dim sum.

Iggy's $$$$ *The Hilton Hotel, 581 Orchard Road;* www.iggys.com.sg. Open for lunch Thursday to Saturday and dinner Monday to Saturday. One of the restaurants ranked under the S. Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list, Iggy's is a modern European restaurant helmed by local culinary star Ignatius Chan. Savour degustation menus of inventive dishes crafted from the freshest ingredients such as *cappellini* in scampi oil.

Killiney Kopitiam $$ *391 Orchard Road (multiple locations);* https://killiney-kopitiam.com/. Opening hours vary. The oldest Hainanese coffee shop in Singapore, first opening its doors in 1919, now with more than 40 outlets in Singapore and further afield. Serving breakfast classics such as eggs and toast as well as rice and noodle dishes.

The Line $$$$ *Shangri-La Hotel, 22 Orange Grove Road;* www.shangri-la.com. Open daily. This all-day buffet restaurant is one of the most popular in town, thanks to its huge variety of cuisines. The 16 culinary stations turn out freshly prepared international fare, from sushi and dim sum to tandoori. It also happens to be housed within the world's first ever Shangri-La Hotel with an ultra-sleek and modern interior.

Newton Food Centre $ *Bukit Timah Road (near Newton MRT)*. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Best visited at night when it's cooler. Ignore the touts, but make sure you choose somewhere where prices are posted prominently. Good bets include barbecued seafood and grilled chicken wings.

Straits Kitchen $$$$ *Lobby Level, Grand Hyatt Singapore, 10 Scotts Road;* www.singapore.grand.hyattrestaurants.com. Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. All of Singapore's favourite hawker foods are gathered at this stunning upscale restaurant. Only buffet-style meals are available, enabling you to take your pick from the Indian, Chinese and Malay cuisine on offer. Recommended are the fried *kway teow* and satay. Temporarily closed for renovations with plans to reopen in 2025.

Taste Paradise $$$ *2 Orchard Turn, 04-07 ION Orchard;* www.paradisegp.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. A great place for a pit-stop after all the shopping. The Cantonese menu is excellent; try the delicious dim sum items including the XO carrot cake and custard buns.

SOUTH SINGAPORE

Osia $$$$ *Resorts World Sentosa, Crockfords Tower, Level 2;* www.rwsentosa.com. Open Thursday to Tuesday for lunch and dinner. Australian celebrity chef Scott Webster creates a menu inspired by fresh Aussie produce and Asian influences. Signatures include Mayura Station Signature Full Blood Wagyu Beef grilled to perfection in the stone-hearth oven, and Chilean sea bass.

Panamericana $$$ *27 Bukit Manis Rd;* www.panamericana.sg. Located in the uber swanky Sentosa Golf Club, but open daily for lunch and dinner to outside diners, *Panamericana* offers a refreshing change from typical regional and Western foods found throughout Singapore. Latin music accompanies amazing tapas from Mexico to Argentina, combined with alfresco dining and a view of the freight ships in the sea beyond.

Skirt $$$$ *W Singapore – Sentosa Cove, 21 Ocean Way;* www.skirt.wsingaporesentosacove.com. Open daily for dinner. A vibrant dining experience awaits meat lovers at Skirt. Beef is aged in glass cabinets and chefs fire up all cuts of meats in the open kitchen right in the centre of the restaurant. Small plates include wood-fired lobster and salt-baked beetroot with large plates such as wood-fired aubergine and octopus.

Tung Lok Signatures $$$ *1 Tanglin Road, Orchard Rendezvous Hotel 02-18;* www.tungloksignatures.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. This modern Chinese restaurant by the famous Tung Lok Group overlooks the water and Sentosa Island. Tuck into delicious specialities such as deep-fried prawns with wasabi-mayo sauce and rack of lamb with homemade sauce. A second restaurant is located in Clarke Quay Central.

HOLLAND VILLAGE AND AROUND

Da Paolo Pizza Bar $$$ *Block 44 Jalan Merah Saga, 01-46;* www.dapaolo.com.sg/home; www.dapaolo.com.sg. Open daily for lunch and dinner, and breakfast on Saturday and Sunday. Located on a leafy street, this

well-known pizzeria with its take-it-easy vibe is ideal for a relaxing meal. The kitchen rolls out made-to-order pizzas and other delicious Italian-style dishes.

Min Jiang One North $$$$ *7A-7B Dempsey Road;* www.goodwoodparkhotel.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. This high-end Chinese restaurant is owned and operated by Goodwood Park Hotel in the desirable Dempsey Hill area. The repertoire extends beyond Sichuan fare, with dishes from various Chinese regions, but the highlight is the Peking duck.

Original Sin $$$$ *Block 43 Jalan Merah Saga, 01-62 Chip Bee Gardens, Holland Village;* www.originalsin.com.sg. Open daily for lunch and dinner. This vegetarian restaurant specialises in Italian and Mediterranean fare, with knockout mock-meat cannelloni and pizzas as well as superb risotto, pasta and salads, in a European setting.

EAST COAST

East Coast Lagoon Food Village $ *1220 East Coast Parkway, next to car park E2*. Open daily. Feast on the best local food within a stone's throw of the sea. Make a beeline for the barbecue chicken wings, satay, vermicelli with satay sauce and barbecue pork noodles. Best visited at night when all the stalls are open.

Jumbo Seafood $$ *Block 1206, 01-07-8, East Coast Seafood Centre, East Coast Parkway;* www.jumboseafood.com.sg. Open daily for dinner and for lunch on Saturday and Sunday. There are several good seafood restaurants at the East Coast Seafood Centre along the East Coast Parkway. Jumbo is one of the best, offering informal outdoor dining. Dishes like chilli crab and prawns with rice are great. The restaurant has five other sites located at Riverside Point, Dempsey Hill, ION Orchard, Jewel Changi Airport and The Riverwalk.

Long Beach UDMC $$$ *1202 East Coast Parkway, #01-04 East Coast Seafood Centre.* Another seafood restaurant with a wide variety of dishes including the famous chilli crab and black pepper crab.

Restaurant PeraMakan @ Owen Road $$ *119 Owen Road;* www.peramakanrestaurant.com. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Authentic, bold-flavoured Nonya food is served here. Specialities include beef *rendang*,

ayam buah keluak (chicken braised with Indonesian *keluak* nuts) and home-made icy *chendol* dessert.

A–Z TRAVEL TIPS

A

ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL

Singapore is an accessible city with wheelchair-friendly infrastructure including at least one lift, ramp or elevator in all MRT stations. Trains have two wheelchair-accessible carriages and 95 percent of all pedestrian walkways, bus shelters and taxi stands are barrier-free, making it easier for the elderly and people with disabilities to navigate the city.

ACCOMMODATION

There are hotels for every budget in Singapore. Major American and international hotel chains are well represented. Most hotels are concentrated in the Civic District (Raffles City, Marina Square areas), on or near Orchard Road and in Chinatown. The **Singapore Hotel Association**'s website (www.sha.org.sg) offers online hotel reservations or you can use other popular booking sites such as Booking.com and Hotels.com. If you arrive without hotel reservations, the Singapore Hotel Association counters at Changi Airport can arrange bookings.

Hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation are few, but there are lots of budget hotels (many with air-conditioning). Travel agents, package travel services and travel websites offer accommodation deals with substantial savings. If you're staying for a longer period, try a service apartment (www.servicedapartments.org.sg), most of which come with all the amenities of a 4- to 5-star hotel, with the added facilities of a fully equipped kitchen and dining area, for lower rates than a hotel room.

Traditionally, high season is June to July and November to January, during the school holidays and year-end festivities. Low season is February to May, August to October. Hotels offer discounted rates during that time. However, hotels are usually packed with locals who check in for 'staycations' on National Day (9 August). In September, sports fans throng the city during Formula 1

season so it's best to book at least several months ahead of time, or check out the various Formula 1 travel packages on offer.

AIRPORT

Singapore Changi Airport (www.changiairport.com) is frequently rated the best in the world. Disembarking passengers will discover why, as the march (assisted by travelators) through customs, immigration and baggage claim usually takes just a matter of minutes. There are four large terminals handling 90 million passengers per year. Excellent modern facilities include banks, business centres, internet access, nurseries, clinics, pharmacies and convenience stores. You can get a pre-paid tourist SIM card in the airport that is valid for 30 days. You can also get a NETS prepaid card, for use on the MRT, buses and many convenience stores. Taxis, airport shuttles and city bus No 36 are available at terminal entrances. A taxi ride downtown (a 16km/10-mile journey) costs about S$20–40, excluding surcharges (Fri−Sun 5pm−midnight S$5; S$3 all other times; additional surcharge of 50 percent of final metered fare daily midnight−6am). Limousine taxis cost $55 and seven-seater taxis cost $60. Taxi rides from the airport to downtown take about 20 to 30 minutes. It's also possible to take the MRT link from the airport to Tanah Merah station and take a westbound train from there to get to the city centre.

Arrive two hours early for departing flights. Leaving Singapore, all passengers must pay an airport departure tax which is incorporated into your air ticket. Transit passengers waiting a minimum of 5.5 hours may qualify for free city tours organised by Changi Airport and Singapore Airlines (check at the Free Singapore Tours (FST) Registration Booth located in Terminal 2 and 3). A transit hotel is available in Terminal 2 and 3, renting rooms inexpensively in six-hour increments (www.harilelahospitality.com). Showers, saunas and gym facilities are also available for hire for travellers wishing to freshen up during a stopover. The airport is open 24 hours but many of its facilities are open daily 7am–11pm. The flight information hotline (toll-free in Singapore only) is tel: 6595 6868.

B

BUDGETING FOR YOUR TRIP

Singapore has the second-highest standard of living in Asia, with some indexes rating number one, above Japan, so expect many prices equivalent to major urban centres in North America and northern Europe. Flights from London to Singapore cost about £800, from the US about US$1700, and from Australia about AU$800. Food and transportation can be bargains. Meals at hawker centres and food courts can be as little as S$3. A three-course dinner in a mid-range restaurant can cost about S$50−70. Subway (MRT) and bus cash fares are between S$1.40 and S$2.50, and taxi trips around town are often as little as S$10. Hotels run the gamut, from under S$70 per room for budget choices to about S$150 for a mid-range double room, to over S$500 for top accommodation. Private city tours are priced at S$28–100 and up.

Entrance fees to sights are reasonable (S$2–18), but entertainment costs (for performances, nightclubs) can be even higher than in Western capitals. Alcohol is expensive, around S$10 for a pint of beer and $12 for a glass of house wine. Many bars have a ‘happy hour’, usually between 5pm and 9pm, with deals such as half-price drinks.

Budget travellers can certainly visit Singapore cheaply, with youth hostels in Little India and Chinatown, and citywide hawker centres offering cheap eats. Singapore has some great attractions, its clean, safe and convenient but it is a long way from the bargain basement of Asia, especially when compared with its backpacker-friendly neighbours.

C

CAR HIRE

Car hire is seldom necessary in Singapore since it is compact and served by excellent and inexpensive forms of public transportation, but major car rental companies operate all over the island, including at the airport and downtown in the hotel districts. The Singapore government, in a concerted effort to reduce traffic congestion, has made car rental and use, especially in the central business district, an expensive and sometimes complicated affair. Rates are about S$50-S$200 per day for a standard economy car and S$80-S$300 for a 2-litre car per day including mileage but not insurance. Rental cars can be taken into Malaysia, but surcharges and petrol restrictions apply (the tank must be at least three quarters full upon leaving Singapore). A valid driver’s licence from your country of residence or a valid International Driving Licence is

required, as is a major credit card. Some companies rent cars only to those over 21 and under 60. Petrol prices are higher in Singapore than in some European countries, and up to three times higher than in the US.

Major car rental companies in Singapore include:

Avis tel: 6737 1668; www.avis.com.sg

Budget tel: 1800-305 5390; www.budget.com.sg

Hertz tel: 1800-734 4646; www.hertz.com

Popular 501 Guillemard Road; tel: 6742 8888

Unique 02-574, 1 Rochor Centre; tel: 6292 7656; http://uniquecarrental.com.sg

Avis, Budget and Hertz are the only car rental companies at Singapore Changi Airport. The counters operate from 7am to 11pm.

Hotels can often arrange for a car and driver; chauffeur-driven luxury cars can cost S$80 per hour and up.

CLIMATE

Singapore's tropical climate is fairly uniform, as are the hours of sunrise and sunset (6.30–7am/6.30–7pm), due to its location just 136 km (85 miles) north of the equator. Rainfall is heaviest from November through January. Humidity is routinely very high all year round, averaging 80–85 percent. Daytime temperatures can soar near the average maximum of 31°C (88°F) in the afternoon and night-time lows can dip to near the average minimum of 24°C (75°F) just before sunrise. The lowest temperature ever recorded in Singapore was 19.4°C (66.9°F). Annual rainfall averages 2357.8mm (93 inches), with sudden but brief downpours common. Climate change has made the island nation vulnerable to extreme heat and rising sea levels. Monthly average temperatures are as follows:

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
°C	26	27	27	27	28	28	27	27	27	27	26	26
°F	79	81	81	81	82	82	81	81	81	81	79	79

CLOTHING

The island's dress code is casual but neat. Short-sleeved cotton sportswear is acceptable almost everywhere. Even businesspeople seldom wear suits or jackets. Some tourists wear shorts, as do many Singapore residents. Mosques require that arms and legs be fully covered (by long-sleeved shirts, trousers and long skirts or sarongs) to enter. Sikh temples require visitors to wear a head covering, as do synagogues for males. Raincoats are hardly necessary, although a light sweater or wrap is sometimes required in the evening and in air-conditioned buildings and vehicles. Umbrellas are handy in a downpour. Hats, sunscreen and sunglasses are essential against the harsh tropical sun, while comfortable walking shoes or sandals are useful for long periods of sight-seeing and shopping.

CRIME AND SAFETY

Singapore has the lowest crime rate in Southeast Asia, but pickpockets and purse snatchers do operate, usually around neighbourhood markets, even though the penalty for pickpocketing is three years in jail and four strokes of the cane. Crime is also very low in hotels, which have discreet security forces, but do use the hotel safety box or room safe for valuables. Report stolen property and other crimes to your hotel and the police (tel: 999 or 1800-255 0000).

Singapore has strict laws covering infractions that might be considered minor elsewhere. Littering can result in a S$300 fine for first-time offenders. Smoking is banned in public places, including restaurants, buses and taxis; the fine is up to S$1,000. The chewing of gum is not banned, but the unauthorised sale of chewing gum is subject to a fine up to S$2,000.

Drug offences are dealt with harshly. The death penalty is mandatory for those convicted of trafficking, manufacturing, importing or exporting certain amounts of drugs.

D

DRIVING

Motorists drive on the left, overtake on the right and yield to pedestrians at designated crossing points. A valid driver's licence or an International Driving

Licence is required. Speed limits are 50–60 kmh (30–37 mph) in residential areas, 70–90 kmh (40–50 mph) on expressways. Singapore roads are in excellent condition and signposted in English. Speed cameras are installed throughout the island. Bus lanes or lanes with unbroken yellow lines are used only by buses during rush hours (Mon–Fri 7.30–9.30am and 5–8pm). Full-day bus lanes (Mon–Sat 7.30am–8pm) are marked by red lines.

All vehicles entering the Central Business District (CBD) from 7.30am to 8pm from Monday to Saturday are required to pay an Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) toll. ERP tolls are also levied on expressways during peak hours (check details with the **Land Transport Authority**, www.lta.gov.sg). All vehicles are installed with an In-Vehicle Unit (IU) and a cash card (stored-value card). The toll is automatically deducted from the cash card each time the vehicle passes through an ERP gantry. The toll varies with the time of day and entry point. The ERP is not in operation on Sunday and public holidays.

Driving information is available from the **Automobile Association of Singapore** (AAS; www.aas.com.sg) and the Land Transport Authority. The AAS emergency road service operates 24 hours a day (tel: 6748 9911). The traffic police can be contacted at tel: 1800-255 0000.

At public car parks and for on-street parking, a pre-paid parking coupon must be displayed. These are sold at petrol stations, post offices and convenience stores. In the car parks of most shopping centres and public buildings, cash card payment is used. Depending on the system installed, you will need to insert your cash card either into a machine at the entrance or into your car's IU so the fee can be deducted when you pass through the gantry.

E

ELECTRICITY

Singapore's voltage is 220–240 A.C., 50 Hertz. Most hotels provide a transformer to convert to 110–120 A.C., 60 Hertz. Outlets require plugs with two round prongs or the three-pronged square type.

EMBASSIES AND HIGH COMMISSIONS

Open Monday–Friday 9am–5pm, although some work shorter hours.

Australia: High Commission, 25 Napier Road, tel: 6836 4100; www.singapore.embassy.gov.au

Canada: High Commission, 11-01, One George Street, tel: 6854 5900; www.singapore.gc.ca

New Zealand: High Commission, 21-04, One George Street; tel: 6235 9966; www.nzembassy.com/singapore

South Africa: High Commission, 15-01/06 Odeon Towers, 331 North Bridge Road, tel: 6339 3319; www.dirco.gov.za

UK: High Commission, 100 Tanglin Road, tel: 6424 4200; www.ukinsingapore.fco.gov.uk

US: Embassy, 27 Napier Road, tel: 6476 9100; http://singapore.usembassy.gov

EMERGENCIES

If you are in a hotel, call the front desk, operator or hotel security. General emergency telephone numbers are:

Police **999**

Ambulance/Fire **995**

24-hour Touristline **1800-736 2000**

G

GETTING THERE

By air. Singapore is served by over 100 international airlines, operating about 7,400 flights a week from over 250 cities. As the regional transport hub, Singapore Changi Airport is a superb stopover. Tickets during the high season (June to September and December to January, from Europe and North America; December to January from Australia and New Zealand) are the most expensive.

Singapore Airlines, the national air carrier, is frequently rated the world's best airline. It offers non-stop and one-stop flights to and from many cities,

including Houston, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco in the US; Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney in Australia; Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington in New Zealand; London and Manchester in the UK; and Cape Town and Johannesburg in South Africa. Singapore Airlines has offices in all the countries it serves (for region-specific contact numbers visit the website; www.singaporeair.com/en_UK/contact-us/), including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and in Singapore itself (2 Orchard Turn, 04-05 ION Orchard; tel: 6223 8888; www.singaporeair.com). Singapore is also home to budget airlines Scoot (www.flyscoot.com/en) and Jetstar Asia Airways (www.jetstar.com/sg/en).

By rail. Visitors can enter and leave Singapore via bus or rail through Malaysia. Trains operated by **Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB)** (www.ktmb.com.my), connect Singapore to Kuala Lumpur and other Malaysian cities. A daily International Express Train connects Singapore to Thailand, as does the **Eastern & Oriental Express** (www.belmond.com). The Tanjong Pagar Railway Station has moved to the Woodlands Train Checkpoint (tel: 6391 6100), near the Malaysian border.

GUIDES AND TOURS

Various private and group tours are offered by Singapore tour companies. These can be booked directly or through hotel tour desks. Use guides licensed and trained by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB). Leading tour operators include **RMG Tours** (www.rmgtours.com). The zany **DUCKTours** (www.ducktours.com.sg) take you from land to river as they cover key tourist sights in their amphibious half-boat, half-truck vehicles. The same company also offers city sightseeing trips on an open-top double-decker bus. Visitors can hop on and off at designated stops along the way. Journeys (www.journeys.com.sg) offer the **Original Singapore Walks**, which take you to the more unusual places of interest, including ‘wet’ markets, red-light districts and war museums.

H

HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE

Singapore has no free medical care and medical evacuation is very expensive, so be sure you are covered by your travel insurance. Most hotels have doctors on call around the clock. Singapore's medical facilities are the finest in Asia. The **Raffles Medical Clinic** (585 North Bridge Road, tel: 6311 1111; www.rafflesmedicalgroup.com) is a 24-hour clinic, as is the **Singapore General Hospital** on Outram Road (tel: 6222 3322; www.sgh.com.sg). For the ambulance service, dial 995. Pharmacies are open 9am–6pm, sometimes later, but it is wise to travel with your own prescriptions and medications. Drink plenty of liquids to avoid heat exhaustion and use sunscreen.

Tap water and ice are perfectly safe to consume in Singapore, but bottled water is widely available.

HOLIDAYS

The following are national holidays. Banks and government offices are closed on these dates, as are some shops. When a public holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday is usually a national holiday.

New Year's Day 1 January

Chinese New Year The first two days of the first lunar month; usually in January or February

Hari Raya Haji Muslim pilgrimage celebrations; date changes annually

Good Friday Usually in March or April

Labour Day 1 May

Vesak Day Buddha's birthday; 8th day of the 4th lunar month, usually in May or June

National Day 9 August

Deepavali Hindu festival; usually in October/November

Hari Raya Puasa Last day of Ramadan, 9th month of the Islamic calendar; date changes annually

Christmas 25 December

LANGUAGE

Singapore has four official languages: English (the language of administration), Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and Malay (the national language). English is widely spoken. Malay is the mother tongue of 15 percent of the population but understood by many Singaporeans. English serves as the island's lingua franca, although the government is attempting to discourage the use of a widespread local form of pidgin known as Singlish, or Singaporean English. Recent years have seen a rise of so-called "mother tongue" schools that seek to redress the English language dominance and reacquaint Singaporeans with their ancestral culture.

LGBTQ+ TRAVELLERS

Homosexuality is legal in Singapore for both sexes, but this only came into effect for men in 2022. Singapore remains a conservative country and discretion is advised for public displays of affection. However, perceptions are changing. Head to Neil Road in Chinatown for several LGBTQ+ venues.

M

MAPS

Free city maps are available at Changi Airport's arrival hall, most hotels and at Singapore Tourism Board's visitor centres (for more information, click here). The free monthly *The Official Guide & Map* and *Where Singapore* magazine also contain maps.

MEDIA

Of the nine major daily newspapers published in Singapore, four are in English, led by *The Straits Times*, which covers local, regional and international news. *The Edge Singapore* is a business and investment weekly. Local magazines in English include *SG Magazine*, *Time Out*, *Where Singapore* and *8 Days*, all of which cover entertainment, attractions and shopping. International newspapers and magazines are available at bookstores, newsstands, shopping centres and

hotel kiosks. Some publications are subject to government-controlled circulation quotas.

Cable and satellite TV broadcasts, with CNN, BBC, MTV, NHK, ESPN and other common channels, are widely available in hotels. Local TV stations broadcast via the following channels: Channel 5 in English, Channel 8 and Channel U in Mandarin, Suria in Malay, Vasantham in Tamil. Okto shows kids' programmes, documentaries and arts content and Channel NewsAsia broadcasts news and current affairs programmes.

Eight of the local radio stations broadcast in English. Popular stations for English music include Class 95 (95FM), Gold 90FM (90.5FM) and 987FM (98.7FM). BBC World Service is also available on FM radio (88.9FM).

MONEY

Currency. The Singapore dollar (abbreviated S$ or SGD) is divided into 100 cents, with coins of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 cents and S$1. Bills in common circulation are S$2, S$5, S$10, S$20, S$50, S$100, S$500, S$1,000 and S$10,000.

Currency exchange. Money-changing services are available at Changi Airport and at most banks, hotels and shopping centres. Licensed money changers (usually located in shopping malls) give slightly better rates than banks; hotels give the worst rates. The exchange rates at the airport are on a par with those at downtown banks.

Credit cards. Major credit cards are widely accepted by Singapore's restaurants, hotels, shops, travel agencies and taxis. Report lost or stolen credit cards to the police (tel: 1800-353 0000). In Singapore, you can call American Express (tel: 1800-299-1997), Diners Club (tel: 6416 0800), Mastercard (tel: 800-110 113) and Visa (tel: 800-110 0344) for replacements.

Digital. Mobile wallet apps are now a popular means of payment in Singapore, notably GrabPay, FavePay and DBS PayLah. WeChat Pay and Alipay are also accepted in some stores.

ATMs. Automated teller machines are everywhere (at banks, shopping malls and many hotels). The Cirrus and Plus system machines work in Singapore just as they do overseas.

OPENING TIMES

Museums and tourist attractions have varying hours, but many open at about 9.30am and close at 5 or 6pm; some are closed at least one day a week. Banks are usually open Monday to Friday 9.30am–3pm, Saturdays 9.30am–12.30pm (but Saturday hours can vary). Government offices operate Monday to Friday 8am–6pm; some are open on Saturday. Many restaurants are open daily 11.30am–10pm, but hawker centres keep longer hours, from dawn to midnight daily. Department stores and shopping centres are generally open daily from 10am–9pm.

P

POST OFFICES

Letters and postcards can be dropped off at hotel front desks. Branches of the **Singapore Post** are generally open Monday to Friday 8.30am–5pm and Saturday till 1pm. The Singapore Post (www.singpost.com) branch at 1 Killiney Road is open Monday to Friday 8.30am–5pm, Saturday 8.30am–1pm, (closed on Sundays). The Changi Airport Post Office is open Monday to Friday 9am–6pm at Terminal 2 Departure Hall. Post boxes are white in colour with a Singapore Post logo. DHL, FedEx, TNT and UPS provide courier services as well.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Buses. Singapore has an efficient public bus system (www.sbstransit.com.sg or www.smrt.com.sg). Cash fares are between $1.40 and S$2.50 for air-conditioned buses. Buses operate daily from 6am to midnight. Ask the driver for the fare to your destination; exact change is required and the money is deposited into a box near the driver.

Alternatively, purchase the **Singapore Tourist Pass** (www.thesingaporetouristpass.com.sg) at selected MRT stations. Enjoy unlimited rides on buses and trains for just S$10 a day. Also available are 2-day (S$29) and 3-day (S$34) tourist passes (with a refundable deposit of S$10 per card). To use the card, either flash or tap it on the electronic readers mounted at bus entrances and entry turnstiles of MRT stations.

If you are planning to be in Singapore for a longer period, buy an **ez-link or NETS card** (stored-value transportation card). This costs S$12 (out of which S$7 is stored value for use) if purchased from Transit Link Ticket Offices, Concession Card Replacement Centres or Passenger Service Centres. Cards bought from 7-Eleven cost S$10, with S$5 stored value. The remaining S$5 is a non-refundable administration charge, but the convenience of using this card far outweighs the expense. Simply tap the card on the electronic reader as you board and alight the bus.

NightRider. SMRT night buses run from 11.30pm–4.35am on Friday, Saturday and evenings of public holidays. Trips cost a flat fee of S$4.50. They provide an inexpensive way of getting around late at night. The routes pass major nightlife areas, including Boat Quay, Clarke Quay, Marina Bay and Orchard Road. Check www.smrt.com.sg for detailed routes.

Nite Owl. SBS Transit runs night buses from midnight to 2am on Friday, Saturday and evenings of public holidays. Trips cost a flat fee of S$4.40. Check details at www.sbstransit.com.sg.

Big Bus Singapore. Sightseeing tours on double-decker buses passing the city's most iconic landmarks. Adult tickets start from S$60 which includes a city and heritage tour.

Subway (MRT). Singapore's Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system is very efficient and simple to use. It operates from 6.00am to around midnight, with trains arriving every 2 to 3 minutes from 7am to 9am and 5 to 7 minutes during off-peak times. Single trip tickets are no longer available. Instead, you will need to purchase a Singapore Tourist Pass which is a special ez-link card (for more information, click here) which entitles you to unlimited travel for the duration that it is valid. Rush hours should be avoided. For information, www.smrt.com.sg. There are six MRT lines: the East–West, North–South, Northeast, Circle and Downtown lines.

Trishaws. (Temporarily closed at the time of writing) Trishaw Uncle (www.trishawuncle.com.sg) is the only licensed operator for trishaw tours in Singapore appointed by the Singapore Tourism Board. The pick-up point is at the Albert Mall Trishaw Park at Queen Street.

Taxis. Singapore's 13,000 taxis are air-conditioned and comfortable. Most of the drivers are friendly and helpful, although a few can be a bit gruff. Within the CBD (including Orchard Road) taxis can only be boarded and alighted at taxi stands and alongside roads; elsewhere in Singapore, simply flag one along the

road. All taxis are metered; most accept credit cards. Basic fares are S$3–3.40 (normal taxi) or S$3.90 (limousine taxi) for the first kilometre, and 22 cents for every 400 metres travelled up to 10km, or every 350 metres travelled after 10km, and every 45 seconds of waiting time.

A variety of surcharges are thrown in for midnight to 6am trips (50 percent is added to the meter fare), peak period travel, travel into restricted downtown zones, advanced booking and airport travel. Under the ERP (Electronic Road Pricing) system, additional charges apply when the taxi passes ERP gantry points during its hours of operation.

The major taxi companies are ComfortDelGro (www.cdgtaxi.com.sg), SMRT (www.smrt.com.sg), Strides Premier (https://stridespremier.com.sg), Trans-Cab (www.transcab.com.sg), Grab (www.grab.com/sg/) and TADA (https://tada.global).

In 2016, the first driverless taxi service began operating in Singapore (as a controlled experiment). Picking up real passengers in a Singapore business park, Nutonomy's Mitsubishi i-Miev and Renault Zoes installed a precautionary safety driver behind the wheel. Other operators are following suit, testing their driverless taxis in Singapore.

T

TELEPHONE

The country code for Singapore is 65. International calls to Singapore are made by dialling the international access code for the originating country, followed by Singapore's country code and the eight-digit local number. International calls from Singapore are made by dialling the international access code (001, 013 or 019) followed by the country code, area code and local number.

Most telephones in Singapore operate using phone cards (stored value cards), which can be purchased from all post offices and convenience stores like 7 Eleven, and be used for making local and overseas calls. International calling cards can be used from any phone; simply dial the calling card's access number for Singapore and follow the instructions.

Local calls made from public phones cost S$0.10 for the first 3 minutes and S$0.10 for every subsequent 3 minutes, up to a maximum of 9 minutes. No

area codes are used within Singapore. Dial 100 for local call assistance and 104 for overseas call assistance.

Mobile phones. Only users of GSM mobile phones with global roaming service can connect automatically with Singapore's phone networks. If you are planning to be in Singapore for any length of time, it is more economical to buy a local SIM card from one of the three service providers: Singtel (www.singtel.com/business), M1 (www.m1.com.sg) or Starhub (www.starhub.com/personal.html). These cards give you a local mobile number and cost between S$10 and S$15. All local mobile numbers begin with '8' or '9'.

TIME ZONES

Singapore time is GMT+8 hours year-round. Although the clock is advanced one hour in summer in some countries (such as the US and UK), it stays the same in Singapore.

TIPPING

Tipping is usually not practised in Singapore. It is not allowed at Changi Airport and discouraged in many hotels and restaurants, where a 10 percent service charge is routinely added to bills on top of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 7 percent. Tour guides and drivers do appreciate tips (5−10 percent). Very small tips (S$1–2) can be paid to taxi drivers, porters and hotel housekeeping staff.

TOILETS

Singapore's public restrooms are reasonably clean and are regularly inspected by health department officials. Most are free, but there's sometimes a nominal charge (S$0.10–S$0.20) for their use.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Singapore Tourism Board** (STB) is a superb organisation, offering mountains of free and helpful literature to visitors. Their website is www.visitsingapore.com.

STB offices abroad include the following:

Australia: Level 11, AWA Building, 47 York Street, Sydney NSW 2000; tel: 02-9290 2888 or 9290 2882; email: stb_infosingapore@stb.gov.sg

UK: Singapore Centre, First floor, Southwest House, 11A Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR; tel: 020-7484 2710; email: stb_london@stb.gov.sg

US: 1156 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 702, New York, NY 10036; tel: 212-302 4861; email: newyork@stb.gov.sg

The Singapore Tourism Board runs a 24-hour tourist information hotline: 1800-736 2000 (toll-free in Singapore), 65-6736 2000 (from overseas); 1 Orchard Spring Lane, Tourism Court; Mon–Fri 9am–6pm. There are several visitor centres at different locations around the city including but not limited to:

Singapore Visitors Centre @ Orchard: Junction of Cairnhill Road and Orchard Road (daily 8.30am–9.30pm).

Singapore Visitors Centre @ ION Orchard: Level 1 Concierge (daily 10am–10pm).

Chinatown Visitor Centre @ Kreta Ayer Square: 2 Banda Street, behind Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum (daily 9am–9pm).

V

VISAS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Canada, China and the US as well as of the Commonwealth, Western Europe and South America need only a valid passport (good for six months) to enter Singapore for a tourist or business visit lasting up to 30 days. Tourists, however, should also carry onward/return tickets to their next destination and sufficient funds for their stay in Singapore. For longer stays, apply to the **Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA)** office (10 Kallang Road; www.ica.gov.sg) or call the hotline (tel: 6391 6100) upon arrival. Vaccination certificates are required only of passengers who arrive from cholera- or yellow fever-infected areas. An immigration card, supplied before arrival, must be filled out and kept with the passport for surrender upon departure.

A complete list of prohibited, restricted and dutiable goods is available from the Customs Duty Officer, Singapore Changi Airport (24-hour customs service

hotline: 6355 2000; www.customs.gov.sg).

Lost or stolen passports should be reported to the police, then to the ICA (tel: 6391 6100), where temporary passports are issued, and finally to your embassy.

W

WEBSITES AND INTERNET ACCESS

For more information about Singapore visit:

www.changiairport.com.sg Changi Airport

www.stayinsingapore.com Online hotel bookings

www.visitsingapore.com Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

www.gov.sg Official Singapore government site

www.hungrygowhere.com Food reviews and listings

www.sistic.com.sg Tickets for performing arts and athletic events

Wireless@SG is a system that provides free wireless at selected hot spots around Singapore. Visitors will need a mobile device with Wi-Fi facility, and need only follow the Infocomm Media Development Authority's simple instructions at www.imda.gov.sg, which also provides a list of hot spots. Or you might prefer to use your own data allowance - make sure to check if roaming charges apply first.

Y

YOUTH HOSTELS

Check Hostelworld (www.hostelworld.com) and Booking.com (www.booking.com) to find hostel accommodation options in and around Singapore. Other inexpensive accommodation offers dorms and small rooms with shared baths, such as **Fort Canning Lodge YWCA** and the **YMCA** on Orchard Road (for more information, click here and for more information, click here).

WHERE TO STAY

Singapore has several of the world's top-rated luxury hotels, a number of boutique hotels, and some of the cleanest budget rooms in Asia.

Posted hotel prices tend to be fairly expensive, but hefty discounts are common. Occupancy is at its highest during the high season (August and December to the end of Chinese New Year) and reservations are recommended. You can book a room yourself on the Singapore Hotel Association's website www.sha.org.sg, which includes full descriptions, rates, and specials for nearly every hotel and inn in Singapore.

All types of accommodation accept major credit cards, except where noted. Meals are normally not included, although some hotels and resorts have package specials that include buffet breakfasts.

Each entry is marked with a symbol indicating the approximate room rate charged per night for a double room with bathroom. Prices do not include the 10 percent service charge and 7 percent goods and services tax, except where noted.

$$$$ over S$450

$$$ S$300–450

$$ S$150–300

$ under S$150

SINGAPORE RIVER

Conrad Centennial $$$ *2 Temasek Boulevard, Singapore 038982;* http://conradhotels3.hilton.com. Adjacent to Millenia Walk and within walking distance to Suntec City and Marina Square, this hotel has large rooms, marble-clad bathrooms, a 24-hour fitness centre and an outdoor pool.

The Fullerton $$$ *1 Fullerton Square, Singapore 049178;* www.fullertonhotel.com. Created within a 1928 colonial landmark fronting Marina Bay, this is one of Asia's top hotels, with grand facilities and acclaimed

bars and restaurants. Business travellers will appreciate its proximity to the financial district.

Grand Copthorne Waterfront $$ *392 Havelock Road, Singapore 169663;* www.millenniumhotels.com.sg. Located along the Singapore River and next to Zouk nightclub, the Grand Copthorne has modern rooms and a marvellous riverside ambience. Disabled access.

InterContinental Singapore Robertson Quay $$$ *1 Nanson Road, Singapore 238909;* www.ihg.com. Modern, newly-opened waterfront hotel with Italian restaurant, outdoor pool and fitness centre. Many rooms overlook the Singapore River.

Pan Pacific $$$ *7 Raffles Boulevard, Marina Square, Singapore 039595;* www.panpacific.com. This elegant hotel offers spectacular harbour views, excellent dining outlets and a 35-storey-high atrium.

The Ritz-Carlton, Millenia $$$$ *7 Raffles Avenue, Singapore 039799;* www.ritzcarlton.com. This luxury hotel at Marina Bay which sits within landscaped grounds has larger-than-average rooms and stunning bathrooms with harbour and city views. Its Sunday champagne brunches are highly popular. It has an impressive contemporary art collection containing works by Dale Chihuly and Andy Warhol. Disabled access.

CIVIC DISTRICT

Citadines Connect City Centre Singapore $$ *182 Clemenceau Ave, Singapore 239923;* www.discoverasr.com. Central location, close to iconic landmarks such as the Istana, The National Museum of Singapore and Fort Canning Hill. Highlights include a rooftop bar and restaurant as well as a gym and swimming pool. Simple but comfortable rooms.

Fort Canning Lodge YWCA $$ *6 Fort Canning Road, Singapore 179494;* www.ywcafortcanning.org*.sg* Located on peaceful Fort Canning Hill, the YWCA has dorms and rooms, some with private baths, for single women, couples and families. A short walk to attractions and Orchard Road.

Grand Park City Hall $$ *10 Coleman Street, Singapore 179809;* www.parkhotelgroup.com. This business hotel is located close to popular tourist sights and major shopping malls such as Raffles City.

InterContinental Singapore $$$ *80 Middle Road, Singapore 188966;* www.ihg.com. Adjoining the air-conditioned shopping mall Bugis Junction that is built over restored pre-war shophouses, this award-winning luxury tower offers shophouse-themed rooms with Peranakan artefacts. Disabled access.

Raffles Hotel $$$$ *1 Beach Road, Singapore 189673;* www.raffleshotel.com. The Raffles is one of the legendary hotels of Asia. Opened in 1887, it was declared a National Monument a century later. Its Long Bar is famous as the place where the Singapore Sling cocktail was first concocted.

Swissôtel The Stamford $$$ *2 Stamford Road, Singapore 178882;* www.swissotel.com. This hotel is located near the CBD and is practically part of a large shopping complex. Contains a business centre, convention centre and a huge number of restaurants and bars (including the excellent rooftop Equinox complex), plus a luxurious spa and a well-equipped fitness centre. Disabled access.

CHINATOWN

Chic Capsule Otel $ *13 Mosque St, Singapore 069333;* https://chiccapsuleotel.com. Situated near the heart of Chinatown, near a plethora of Sichuan, Hunan and other Mainland China-style restaurants, this capsule hotel is more a youth hostel than anything else. But you won't get a better location for the price, and staff are friendly and helpful.

Hotel 1929 $ *50 Keong Saik Road, Singapore 089154; tel: 6347 1929;* www.hotel1929.com. This boutique property combines a mix of old-world Singapore architecture and nouveau-chic style. No two rooms are designed the same way and many are embellished with unique furniture from the owner's private collection. 32 rooms.

Hotel Soloha $ *12 Tek Lim Road, Singapore 088387;* https://solohahotels.com. Another boutique hotel without the expensive price

tag, *Hotel Soloha* is within easy reach of Chinatown, offering funky interiors and cosy lighting which makes for a comfortable stay.

Parkroyal on Pickering $$$ *3 Upper Pickering Street, Singapore 058289;* www.parkroyalhotels.com. This contemporary hotel houses a luxurious spa, sprawling sky gardens and a jogging track high above the street level. The rooms, decked out in natural elements, offer views of the river and city. 367 rooms.

The Scarlet $$ *33 Erskine Road, Singapore 069333;* www.thescarlethotel.com. Located near Chinatown and the buzzing Club Street, this decadent, boutique hotel is luxurious and dramatic. The 80 rooms consist of five suites, 39 rooms geared towards business travellers and 36 deluxe and standard rooms. It has a roof-top bar and open-air jacuzzi.

LITTLE INDIA

7 Wonders Hostel @Upper Dickson Road $ *12A Upper Dickson Road, Singapore 209494;* www.7wondershostel.com. With hostels dotted across Singapore, this mini chain offers comfortable and clean accommodation that is significantly cheaper than the plethora of upmarket hotels that dominate the island. With a great location in the middle of Little India, good amenities including fast Wi-Fi and dorm bunks with reading lights and luggage storage, this is the best option for travelling Singapore on a shoestring.

The Great Madras by Hotel Calmo $ *28 Madras Street, Singapore 208422;* https://hotelcalmo.co. Simple yet aesthetically pleasing interiors, this boutique hotel also has a café, rooftop pool, barbershop and laundromat. Perfect location for exploring Little India.

Village Hotel Albert Court $$ *180 Albert Street, Singapore 189971;* www.stayfareast.com. Bespoke hotel with nostalgic interior decor and modern facilities. Houses a North Indian and Nepalese restaurant. Some rooms have disabled access.

Wanderlust Hotel $$ *2 Dickson Road, Singapore 209494;* http://wanderlusthotel.com. The building, constructed in the 1920s, was once an old school and the concept is totally unique. Each of the four levels were

designed by award-winning local design agencies, which means it's a favourite with the arty crowd. Based in Little India, the hotel is conveniently located, with easy access to a diverse range of shops, restaurants and cultural attractions.

ORCHARD ROAD

Four Seasons $$$ *190 Orchard Boulevard, Singapore 248646;* www.fourseasons.com/singapore. Built to compete with Asia's most upscale hotels, the elegant Four Seasons has a prime location and a vast fitness and recreation centre including four tennis courts, two swimming pools and 24-hour gym. The restaurants and bar lounge are top-notch. Disabled access.

Goodwood Park $$ *22 Scotts Road, Singapore 228221;* www.goodwoodparkhotel.com. A national landmark dating from 1900, this grand hotel in expansive gardens off Orchard Road is renowned for its romantic interiors, history, and durian desserts.

Grand Hyatt $$$ *10 Scotts Road, Singapore 228211;* www.singapore.grand.hyatt.com. A stone's throw from Orchard Road, this top luxury hotel has turned half its rooms into large business suites for working travellers. It has outstanding dining concepts and a popular martini bar. Disabled access.

Hilton Singapore $$$ *333 Orchard Road, Singapore 238883;* www3.hilton.com. The Hilton has been a favourite of business travellers for its central location. This Hilton has a fine Italian restaurant by the rooftop pool and a lobby café famous for its baked cheesecake. Disabled access.

Holiday Inn Singapore Orchard City Centre $$ *11 Cavenagh Road, Singapore 229616;* www.ihg.com. North of Orchard Road near the Istana, this Holiday Inn has clean, modern rooms, an efficient staff and a top-rated Indian restaurant. Disabled access.

Hotel Jen Tanglin Singapore by Shangri-La $$ *1A Cuscaden Road, Singapore 249716;* www.hoteljen.com/tanglin. Jen's rooms are spacious, comfortable and practical. There's a 24-hour gym and a great restaurant serving local specialities next to the swimming pool. Disabled access.

Orchard Hotel $$$ *442 Orchard Road, Singapore 238879;* www.millenniumhotels.com. The rooms are done up in a chic East-meets-West decor. One of Singapore's top Chinese restaurants, Hua Ting, is located here. Ideally located on Orchard Road, Singapore's most iconic shopping street.

Orchard Rendezvous Hotel $$ *1 Tanglin Road, Singapore 247905;* www.rendezvoushotels.com. A stone's throw from Singapore's Botanic Gardens, this hotel is ideally located close to Orchard Street, with a wide range of restaurants, shops and cafés nearby. There's also a rooftop swimming pool, fitness centre and an on-site restaurant. Rooms have a contemporary, spacious feel.

Shangri-La $$$ *22 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 258350;* www.shangri-la.com. For over 50 years, Shangri-La's flagship hotel in Singapore has won many international awards, deservedly so given its high level of service, spacious rooms, excellent fine dining and a commanding location in a large garden estate near Orchard Road. The lobby and guestrooms of the Tower Wing were completely redesigned in 2017. Disabled access.

Sheraton Towers Singapore $$ *39 Scotts Road, Singapore 228230;* www.sheratonsingapore.com. 5-star hotel just a short walk from Orchard Road, away from the bustle, yet still easily accessible. The fine dining Li Bai restaurant serves excellent Cantonese cuisine.

Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel $$$ *320 Orchard Road, Singapore 238865;* www.marriott.com. Located right at the corner of Orchard and Scotts roads, this Marriott has spacious, contemporary rooms. Tangs departmental store is just next door. Disabled access.

YMCA @ One Orchard $$ *1 Orchard Road, Singapore 238824;* https://ymcaih.com.sg. A popular budget hotel, this YMCA has dormitories and single, twin and family rooms. There is a restaurant and a rooftop swimming pool on the premises. Requires advanced booking.

SENTOSA

Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort $$$ *101 Siloso Road, Sentosa, Singapore 098970;* www.shangri-la.com. Singapore's only beachfront hotel

overlooks the South China Sea. After its S$80 million makeover, guests can now enjoy upgraded rooms and facilities including chic restaurants, a spa and a children’s club. While it is not the most convenient place to stay for access to the city, it does have a free downtown shuttle service. Disabled access. Six restaurants and bars offering a wide selection of cuisines.